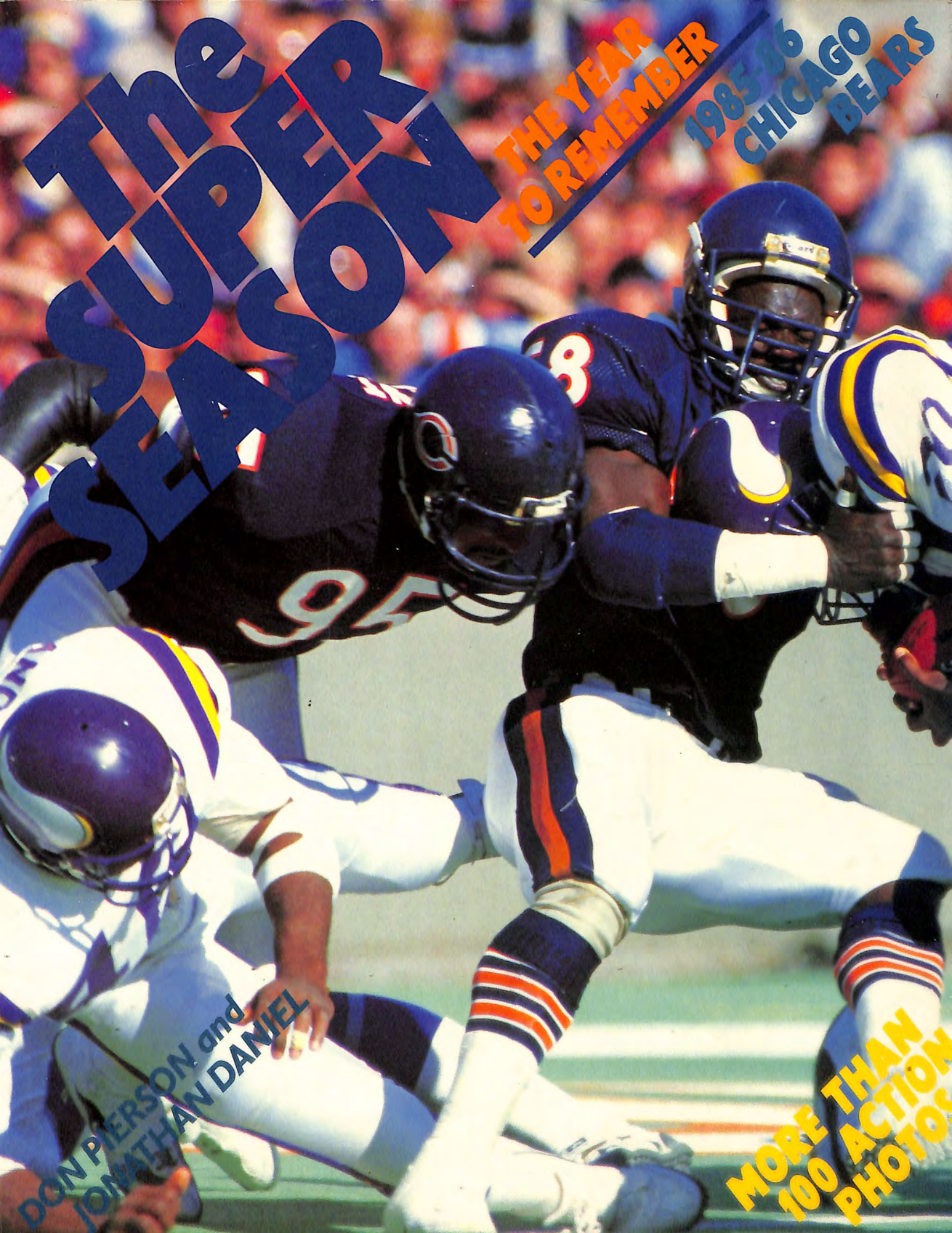
The SUPER SEASON

THE YEAR TO REMEMBER

1985-86 CHICAGO BEARS



DON PIERSON and JONATHAN DANIEL

MORE THAN 100 ACTION PHOTOS

The SUPER Season

The Year to Remember–
1985-86 Chicago Bears

by Don Pierson and Jonathan Daniel

bonus books

Chicago 1986

Dedicated To:

Kathy, Craig, and Kate

Peter Mitchell

© 1986 by Bonus Books, Inc.
All Rights Reserved

Except for appropriate use in critical reviews or works of scholarship, the reproduction or use of this work in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, and in any information storage and retrieval system is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

90 89 88 87 86 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 85-73453

International Standard Book Number: 0-933893-13-2

Bonus Books, Inc.
160 East Illinois Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Cover design: Howard Solotroff

Cover photo: Jonathan Daniel

Book design: Newton Jacobson

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

4	1. Simply Super
17	2. The Main Man
25	3. Stopping 'Em–The Defense
40	4. Goal to Go–The Offense
54	5. McMayhem
62	6. Sweetness
70	7. The Refrigerator
78	8. Team Roster and Depth Chart

1

Simply Super

The Chicago Bears recaptured the Windy City and took a nation by storm in 1985. They jolted the imagination of old-fashioned pro football fans and grabbed the attention of new ones.

They were throwbacks to an era when football was more famous for its spills than its frills, when film was black and white and players were black and blue.

They reinvented vicious defense in an era of fancy offense and revolutionized offense with a 300-pound fullback. William "The Refrigerator" Perry gave an adoring country a season of belly laughs while giving admiring tacklers a reason for belly aches.

Inspired by Coach Mike Ditka, the Bears stunned the Dallas Cowboys 44-0 on Nov. 17 to clinch their second straight National Football Conference Central Division title. It was their 11th victory without a loss and marked the earliest a team had ever clinched a Division title in a 16-game season.

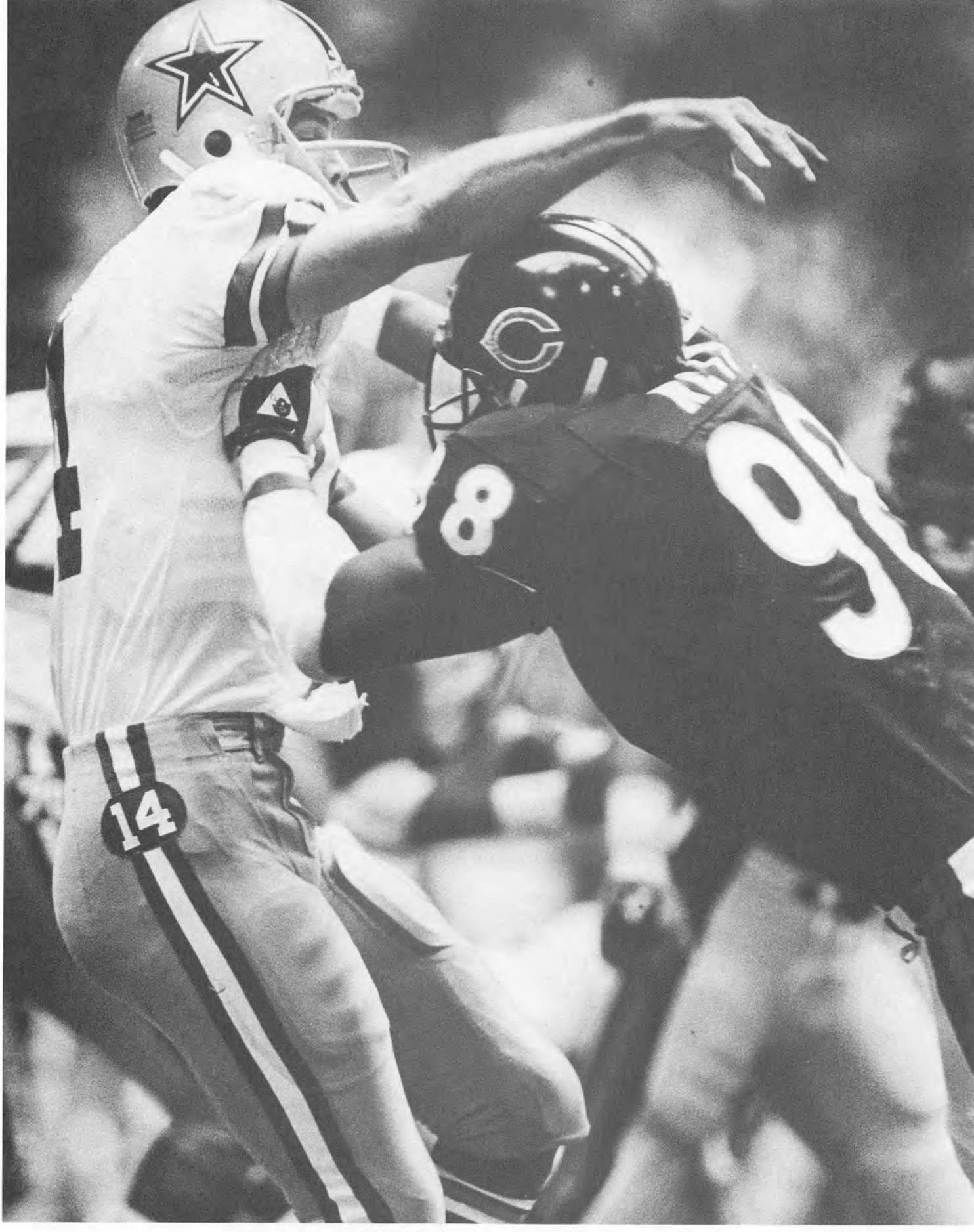
Afterwards, they joked about their rowdy image and guessed they might be called the "Kremlin's Team" after handing "America's Team" the worst loss in their history.

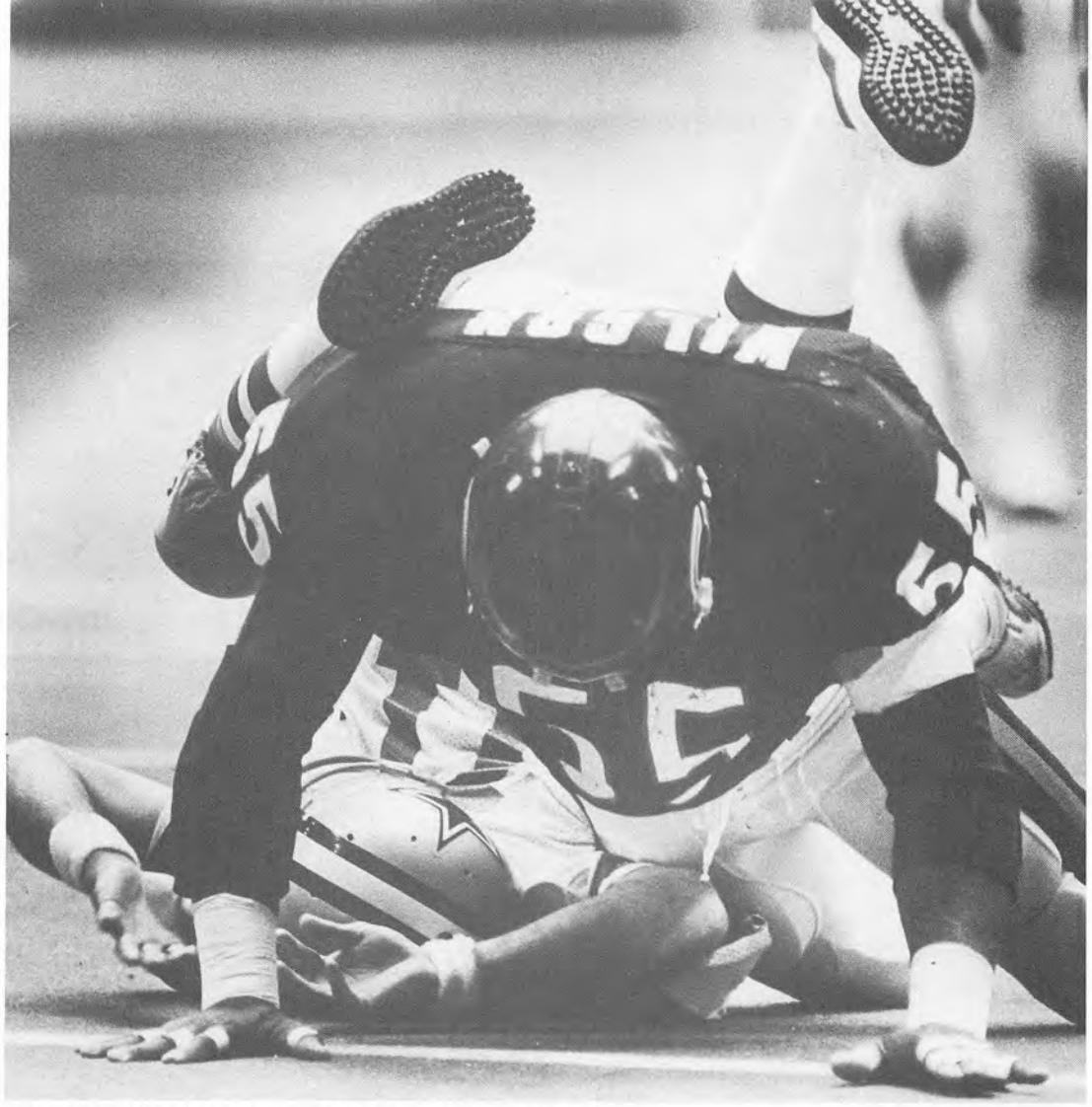
Ditka preferred to be simply "Chicago's Team," the lunch-bucket bunch that rekindled the passion of the American worker in a sport that had become more a pastime for the American owner.

"I think they appreciate us in Brooklyn, Pittsburgh, Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Birmingham, good working towns where people know what it's all about," said Ditka. "I don't think we go over too well in Beverly Hills, Miami, places like that."

To Ditka, the Bears were once again "George Halas's Team." They recalled the days when

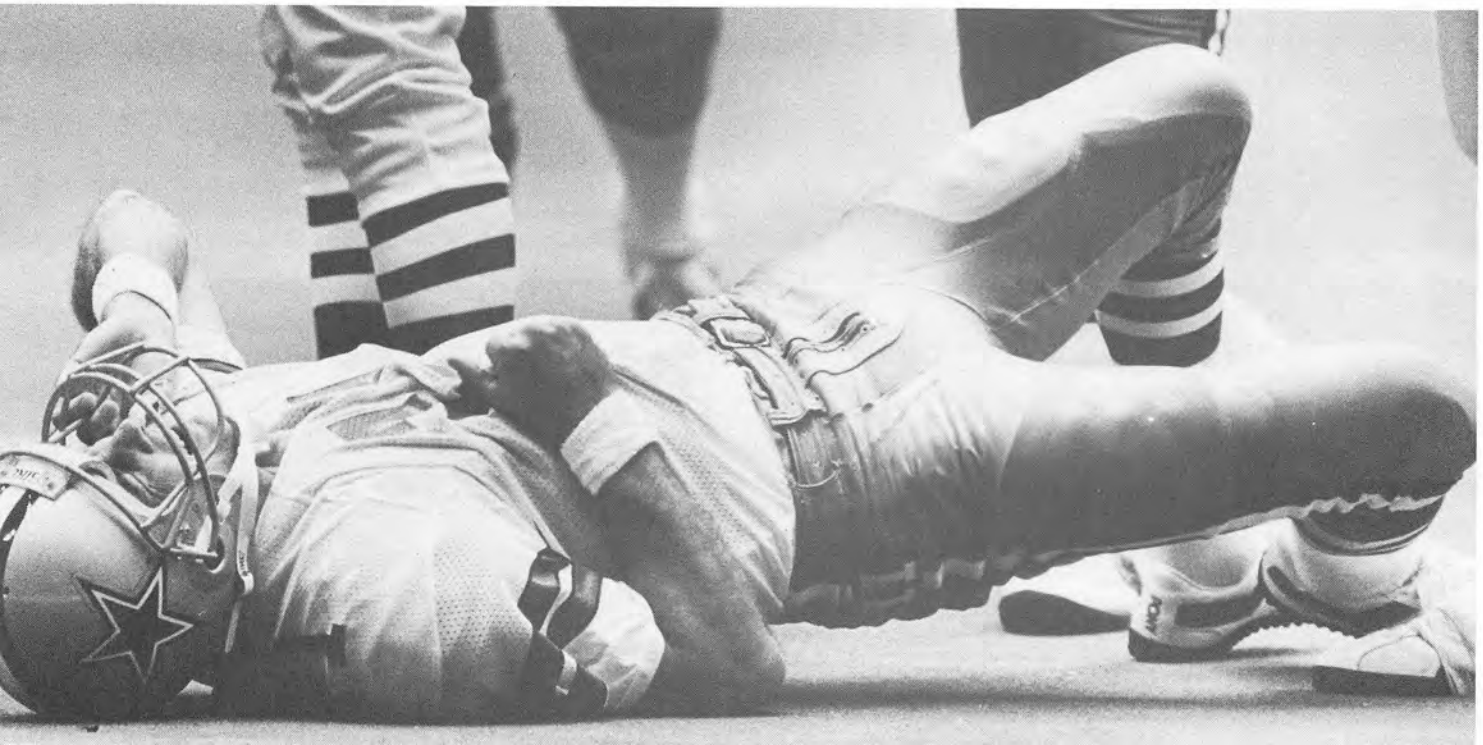
Over Throw: *Defensive End Tyrone Keys (98) knocks down Dallas Quarterback Gary Hogeboom, forcing him to throw an incompletion.*


14
8



Ouch: *Linebacker Otis Wilson lands on top of Quarterback Danny White. It was the second time Wilson knocked White out of the Dallas game. White did not return.*

Tough Play: *Dallas Quarterback Danny White is in obvious pain after being sacked by Linebacker Otis Wilson.*



helmets were leather and headslaps were legal. They played on plastic and pretended it was mud.

"We have to put a chip on our shoulders and dare anyone to knock it off," said Ditka.

No More Honey

The chip became as important as the pads.

"We ask no quarter, give no quarter," said Ditka.

It became the team cheer, the only one they needed. After 10 games, the Bears fired their cheerleaders. The Honey Bears were allowed to finish the season and then they were finished. There would be nothing sweet about these Chicago Bears.

"I think Mr. Halas would really be excited about what's going on," said Ditka of the late Papa Bear, who had hired him in 1982. "This group of kids—he'd really like the McMichaels, the Hamptons, and the other kids we have, the McKinnons, the Coverts, and the Suheys."

The greatest of them all, Walter Payton, described his teammates as escapees from the cast of "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest."

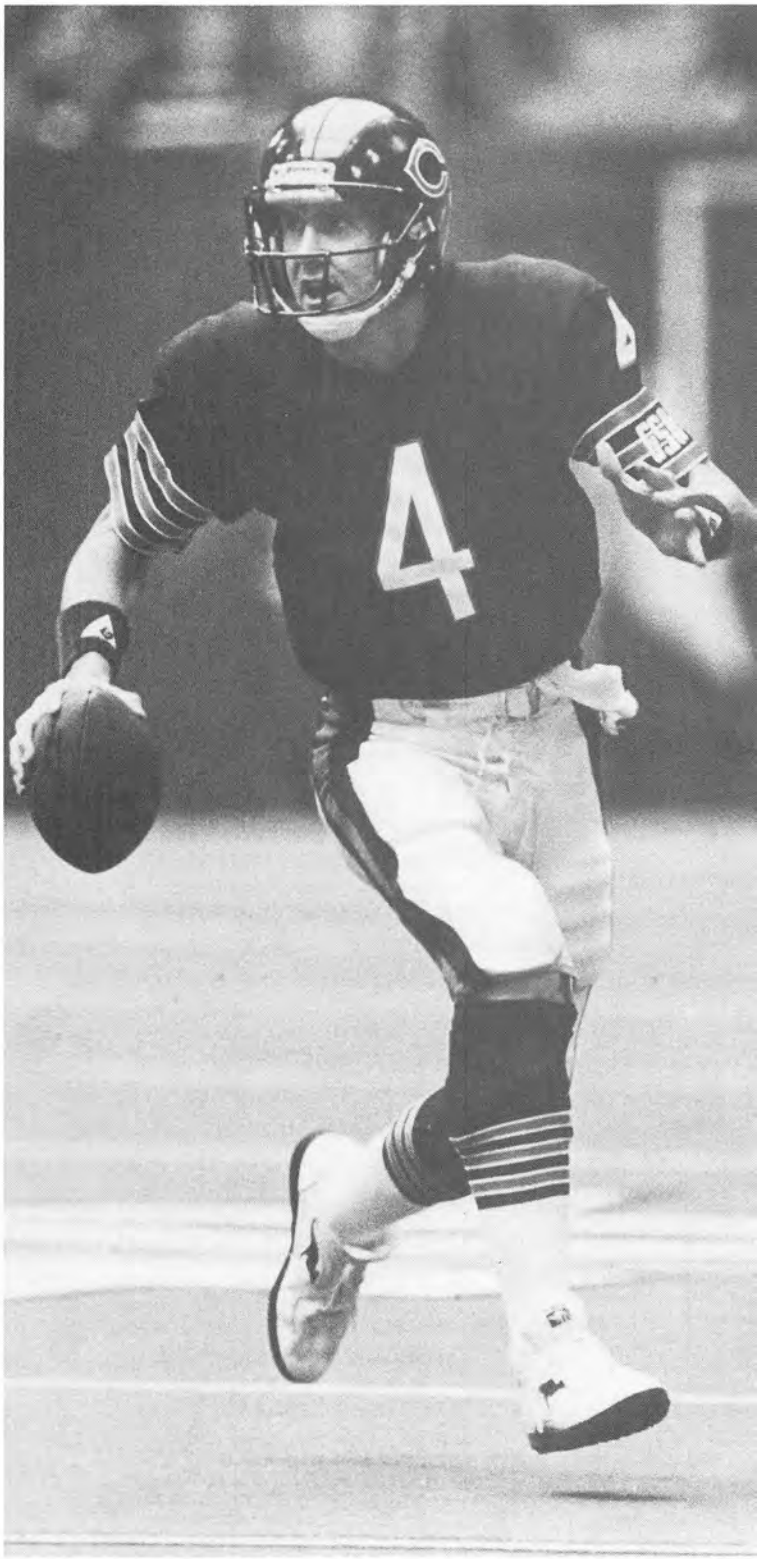
They hated to lose and loved to be loose. Their trip to Dallas provided further proof that the Bears were a team on the rise. In two years, they had beaten the 1983 Super Bowl champion Washington Redskins twice, the 1984 Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Raiders, and the 1985 Super Bowl champion San Francisco 49ers.

Now they were traveling to Dallas without injured first-string Quarterback Jim McMahon.

"They said we wouldn't even be able to show up in Dallas if we didn't have our quarterback," said Ditka. "We managed to get by."

Scoreboard Gazing: *Injured Guard Kurt Becker and Quarterback Jim McMahon (rt) watch a replay on the "Diamond Vision" scoreboard at Texas Stadium.*

Close Doesn't Count: *Dallas Linebacker Randy Wright (54) draws near but Walter Payton breaks away for a big gain.*



Nearly Complete: *Back-up Quarterback Steve Fuller looks for Tight End Tim Wrightman downfield as he rolls out to the left against a strong Cowboy pass rush.*

Steve Fuller was starting his second game in a row and his teammates were confident. So was Ditka.

The last time the Bears had defeated Dallas was in 1971, when Ditka was playing for the Cowboys.

In 1984, the Cowboys beat the Bears in Chicago and Ditka admitted he was outcoached by his old mentor, Tom Landry. After playing for Landry for four years and coaching under him for nine, Ditka was trying to beat him in their first meeting.

"I was uptight," said Ditka. "I really wanted to win that game. I choked."

This time, Middle Linebacker Mike Singletary said Ditka was "as calm as I've ever seen him."

Tickets for the game were going for as much as $250, unusually steep for a regular season game. When the Bears arrived at their hotel, they were swamped by well-wishers and curiosity-seekers.

"That's the way the Cowboys are welcomed all over the country," said Ditka. "I'm sure the 49ers and Dolphins and some other teams are, too. The Bears were never welcomed like that."

It was only the first sign of arrival.

What a Game

"When we walked onto the field, everybody was really pumped up and very relaxed," said Safety Gary Fencik. "We had a really good feeling about the game and the game plan was solid. What happened was almost too good to be true."

Six for Gentry: *Running Back Dennis Gentry (29) takes a handoff from Rookie Quarterback Mike Tomczak and scoots for a TD against the Cowboys in the fourth quarter.*

Way To Go: *Wide Receiver James Maness (on injured reserve list) congratulates Kevin Butler after his successful field goal against Dallas.*

Let's Go: *The four starting defensive backs, Dave Duerson (22), Leslie Frazier (21) Gary Fencik (back) and Mike Richardson (27) gather in the end zone of Texas Stadium and await introductions at the Dallas game.*

Big Day: *Steve Fuller scrambles up the middle against the Cowboys on a quarterback draw play.*

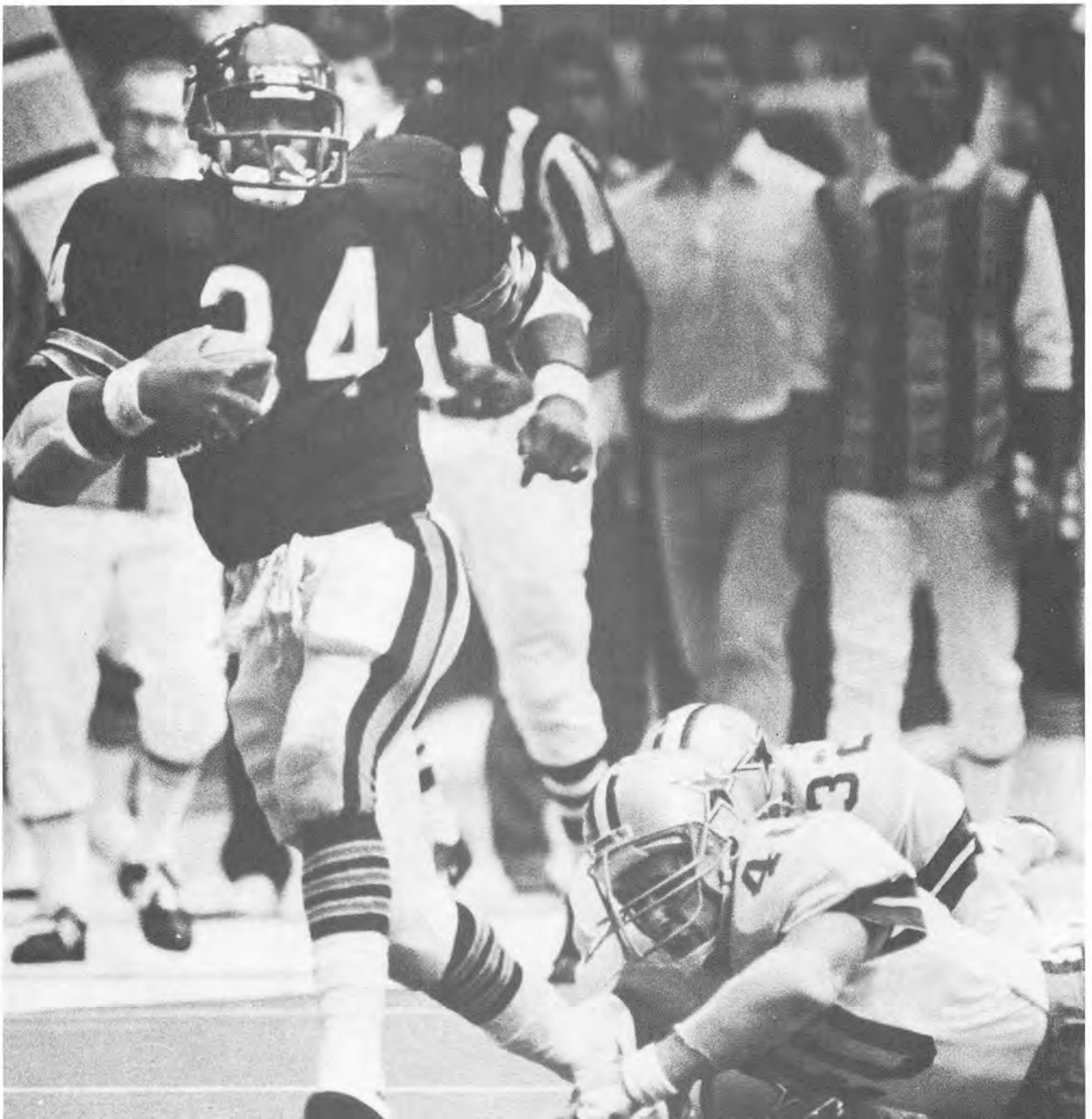
The defense scored the first two touchdowns and the offense mopped up.

After the punting of Maury Buford pinned the Cowboys at their own 2-yard line, Defensive End Dan Hampton batted a pass by Dallas Quarterback Danny White into the air and Defensive End Richard Dent caught it at the 1-yard line and scored. After Linebacker Otis Wilson knocked White out of the game, Cornerback Mike Richardson intercepted the second pass thrown by sub Quarterback Gary Hogeboom and ran it back 36 yards for a touchdown.

Rookie Kevin Butler kicked three field goals, Fuller scored once, and sub Running Backs Galvin Thomas and Dennis Gentry scored touchdowns after Payton gained his usual 100 yards. Ditka apologized to Landry for the big score.

Chicago fans and many Texans in the capacity crowd chanted, "Let's Go Bears" as the team left the field with the satisfaction of an unprecedented victory. Nobody ever had done that to the proud Cowboys anywhere, let alone in hallowed Texas Stadium.

Three Down: *Walter Payton breaks out on a 35-yard run in the fourth quarter as three Cowboy defenders bite the Astro-turf behind him.*



No Hard Feelings: *Cowboy Running Back Tony Dorsett (33) congratulates one of his tormentors, Linebacker Otis Wilson, after the rout.*

Birds-Eye View: *Defensive Tackle Steve McMichael (76) and Defensive End Tyrone Keys sack Dallas Quarterback Gary Hogeboom. Defensive End Richard Dent (95) gets the best view.*

Middle Man: *Linebacker Mike Singletary coils into his spring-like stance and keeps an eye on the Cowboy offense.*

The Bears also managed to leave them laughing. With the score 24-0, Defensive Tackle Perry entered as usual with the goal line offense on the 2-yard line.

Perry went in motion and blocked for Payton. Payton got to the 1-yard line, where he was stacked up by several Cowboys. Perry jumped off the ground, grabbed Payton and tried to carry him into the end zone. It is illegal to aid a runner in such a manner and the Bears were penalized 10 yards, but when the fans saw Perry's extraordinary effort on the stadium replay screens, they booed the referee's correct call.

"I was trying to pull some of those people off him," said Perry. "When I got to Walter, I wanted to help him, too. If they didn't call me for holding or something, I believe we both would have got into the end zone." When Perry got to the sideline, his teammates apprised him of the rules. "They told me I couldn't do that," he said. "I'm just having fun."

Ditka joked that he had spent considerable time designing the play. "Next week, we put Walter on his shoulders," said Ditka.

As for the startling victory, Ditka continued to downplay it.

"Beating them is no big deal, but making us 11-0, winning the Central Division, adding another step of prestige or whatever you want to call it, to the Chicago Bears organization means a lot," said Ditka.

Game Balls for All

Then he gave every player on the team a game ball and said he wanted to gold plate Fuller's.

It was not the only big victory in a big season.

Fridge Greets: *William "The Refrigerator" Perry extends a warm welcome to Dallas Quarterback in the Cowboys backfield.*

Too Late: Tight End Emery Moorehead leaves three Dallas defenders clutching air on this pass completion.

Still Friends: Head Coach Mike Ditka hugs Dallas assistant coach and former colleague, Ernie Stautner, after the Dallas game.

Opening day provided a glimpse of things to come when the Bears fell dangerously behind the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the first half only to rally for a 38-28 victory. The defense was shaky until the second half, but the offense came through.

"The Buccaneers took it to us like no one had for a year," said Fencik. "But our offense scored points like nobody had seen before. Winning in that fashion set a tone for the team. I think it sent a message that this team would be different."

Soon, everybody noticed.

Before their second encounter with the Buccaneers, Tampa Bay Coach Leeman Bennett said there was "no question" the Bears were the best team in football.

"You don't know whether to defend against the run or the pass," he said.

New England coach Raymond Berry said the Bears' offense was one of the best-conceived in the league. Then the Bears' defense shut down the Patriots 20-7, allowing them past midfield for only one play, a 90-yard touchdown pass.

Washington coach Joe Gibbs said his Redskins were liable "to get killed." They did, 45-10, after the Bears fell behind 10-0.

San Francisco coach Bill Walsh said the Bears' defense was so innovative and effective that it "depressed" him just to think about it.

Green Bay coach Forrest Gregg said the Bears "could be the best team that's occurred in this league in the last 10 years."

"We know when smoke is being blown and when it's time to get to the business at hand," said Payton.

The Bears truly seemed to enjoy playing as much as winning. The season's first turning point came in San Francisco on Oct. 13 when

Six for Thomas: *Running Back Calvin Thomas squirts through a hole in the middle of the line and scores a touchdown against the Cowboys.*

All Right: *Cornerback Mike Richardson (27) celebrates an interception for a touchdown with Otis Wilson in the end zone.*

the Bears beat the world champion 49ers 26-10. The Bears were still smarting from the 49ers' 23-0 victory over the Bears in the 1984 NFC championship game.

"This time, there was an electricity on the field," said Fencik. "I knew how much my teammates cared and how much I cared to prove to the 49ers and everybody that the game last year was a fluke. We didn't waste any time taking it to them. After that game, I knew we were on our way to having a good season."

McMahon passed to a quick 16-0 lead and the defense squeezed the 49ers dry. When they had closed to 16-10 by halftime, Payton ran them down.

Perry carried the ball on the final two plays of the game and Ditka was accused of rubbing it in. He tried to deny it, and the subsequent success of Perry proved that Ditka had discovered a larger weapon than a mere needle.

But an incident in the Bears' third game of the season provided a clear picture of Ditka's intentions for the 1985 Bears. Upon arriving in Minneapolis for a nationally-televised Thursday night game against the Vikings, Ditka saw in the paper that Minnesota Coach Bud Grant was criticizing opposing teams for sloppy behavior during the national anthem. Grant praised the good manners of his own team and chastised ABC-TV for not televising the anthem live to the nation. The network showed a tape at halftime.

The Vikings stood at attention with helmets neatly tucked under their right arms. The Bears stood opposite them with helmets under their left arms. As soon as the music started, the Bears snapped to attention and slapped their right hands over their hearts.

"Never get upstaged in anything you do in life," said Ditka.

2

The Main Man

By midseason, football fans around the country finally began to distinguish between Mike Ditka and Dick Butkus.

"They used to see me and say, "I know you. You're Mike . . . Mike . . . Mike . . . Dick Butkus,'" said Ditka.

Ditka was the one coaching the Bears in a season to remember. Butkus was the one talking about them on the radio. Together they did commercials. For Chicagoans, they are synonymous with the Bears. Neither ever needed a first name and neither ever needed their last name taped on the back of a jersey. They were identified by the way they played.

Ditka has a name like a clenched fist. That's how he played and that's how he coaches. Moreover, he thinks that's the way George Halas invented the game and the only way he intended it to be played.

Ditka pointed to the ancient rivalry between the Bears and Green Bay Packers as an example.

"Their players don't pick up anybody off the ground and ours don't pick any of theirs up," Ditka said. "After the game, you shake hands and say, 'Good job. I enjoyed playing. See you again in two weeks.'

"We went through a span in pro football when there was so much patting guys on the butt and picking them up that you wondered what was going on."

Not Two-Hand Touch

Good sportsmanship is important, but if that were the object of football, everybody could play two-hand touch.

"We wouldn't need pads. We need that stuff, articles of clothing worn when you go into battle. There's a little bit of war out there. If you ap-

Braintrust: *Quarterback Jim McMahon and Back-up Quarterback Steve Fuller plan the next series of plays with Head Coach Mike Ditka and Offensive Coordinator Ed Hughes.*

proach it any other way, it doesn't make sense to me," said Ditka.

Losing never made any sense, either.

After winning their first nine games, the Bears were asked about pressure. Some observers thought it would be better for the Bears

Bear Down: *Head Coach Mike Ditka urges on his players during the first half of the Tampa Bay game.*

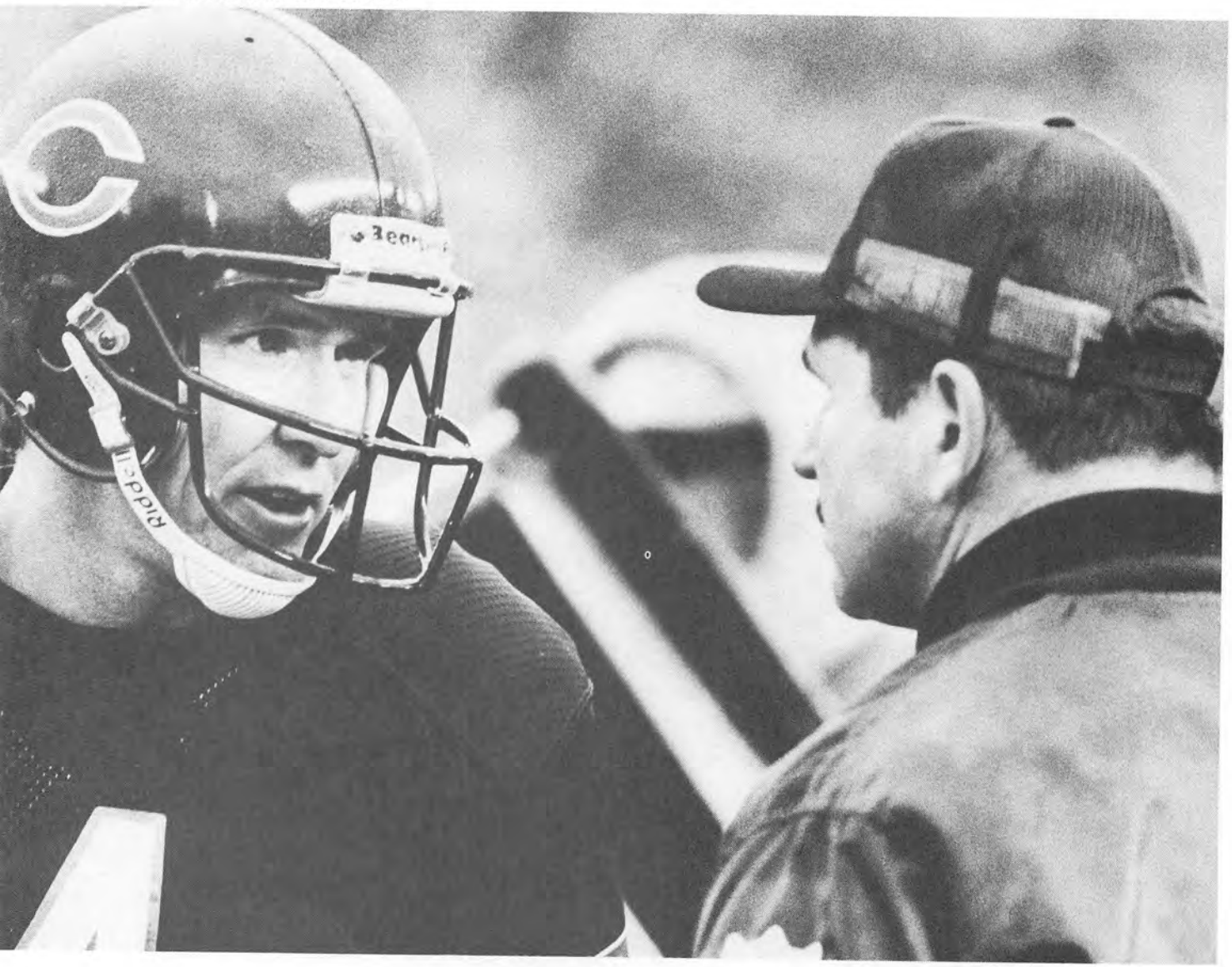
Tongue In Cheek: *Head Coach Mike Ditka works on his gum during a pre-season game against the Colts.*

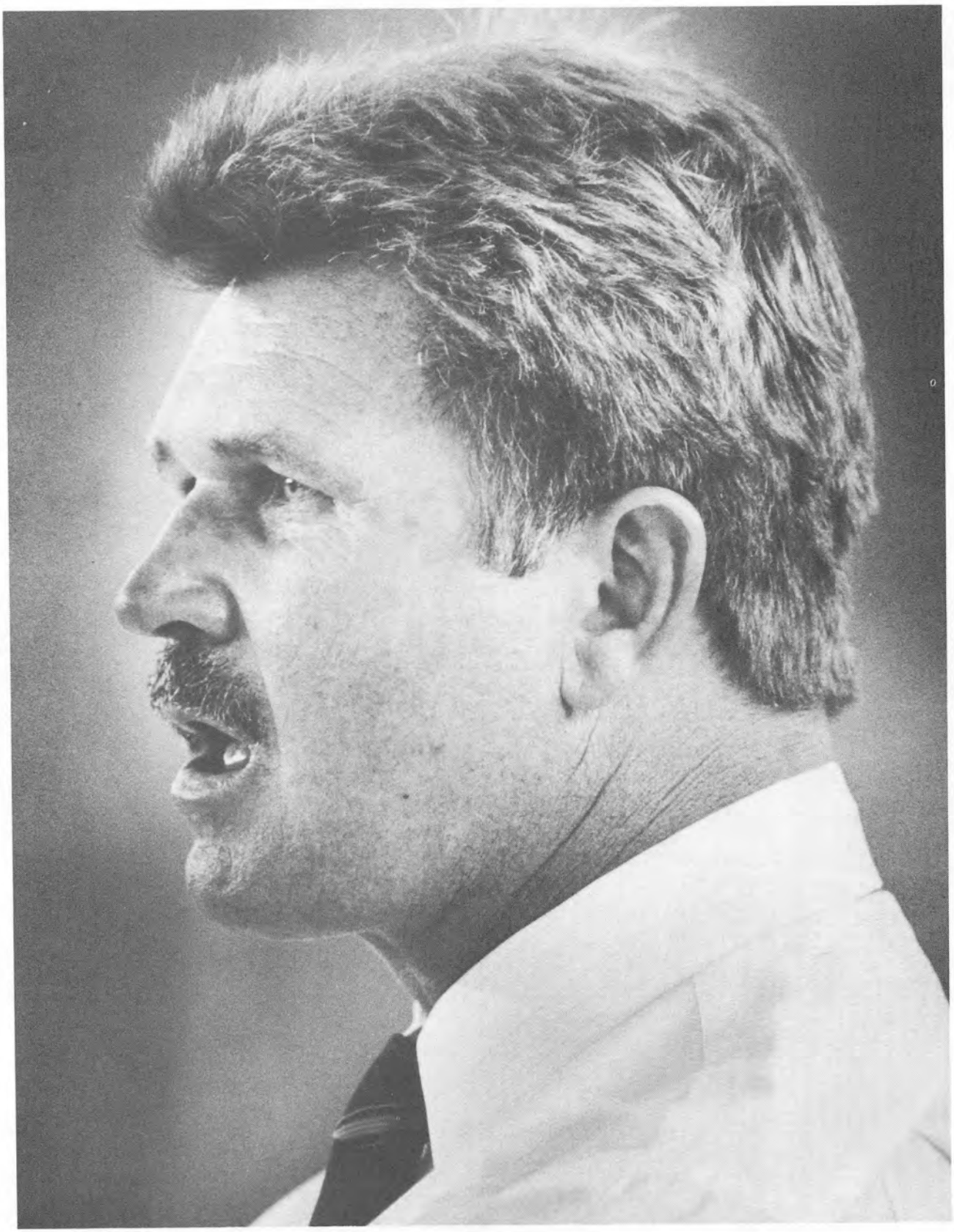
to lose before they got to the playoffs. Ditka had another idea. "Let's do something spectacular," he suggested.

The Bears were the only undefeated team left at the time. They were everybody's No. 1 team and every other team's No. 1 target.

It was time for Ditka to coach temperament. It is an unlikely subject for a man who rants and raves on the sidelines.

Eyeball to Eyeball: *Quarterback Steve Fuller and Head Coach Mike Ditka share a stare on the sidelines at Detroit.*





Memory Lane: Head Coach Mike Ditka, a former all-pro tight end tosses passes to receivers during practice in Platteville.

The Packers had just won a few battles while losing a 16-10 war. They came out swinging and were penalized for four personal fouls in the first half. While protecting their six-point lead in the fourth quarter, Bears' linebacker Otis Wilson was penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct on a third-down play, giving the Packers 15 yards and a first down.

"I jumped on Otis first thing after the game," said Ditka. "I don't care that we won. We're not going to win a game in a situation like this if it happens against a better football team."

One victory was still warm and Ditka was getting ready for the next one.

"I don't know if this thing can go all the way, but why not? Why not think it can?" he asked.

"Nobody cares if you lose. If you lose, you lose. When you win, you're constantly being scrutinized and analyzed. You're constantly being disliked by the opposition."

Ditka has hated to lose since he played Little League baseball, when strikeouts led to broken bats.

Play Hard—Or Don't Play

He not only hated to make a mistake himself, he hated for anyone else to make a mistake. Once in Little League, he was catching and his younger brother, Ashton, was pitching. Ashton was having trouble throwing strikes. After a conference on the mound with the manager, the two brothers switched positions. That worked until the shortstop made an error. Mike switched to shortstop.

Before the Bears started winning, Ditka got them to play hard. He demanded it until the players demanded it of themselves.

"They play hard because I think they know they have to play hard to stay on the field. There's nobody I wouldn't replace. We've already proven that," said Ditka.

At Pitt, Ditka's line coach, Ernie Hefferle, recalled how Ditka complained about using dummies and blocking sleds in practices. "He always wanted to go against his teammates," Hefferle said. "When he got onto the field, everybody was his enemy."

The way Bears' defensive tackle Steve McMichael treats his own teammates on a practice field reminds Ditka of himself. Ditka praised McMichael's aggressive work habits while admitting that some of his teammates probably don't appreciate them.

McMichael gave Ditka credit for weeding out players who "were wallowing around" and hiring players who share Ditka's intensity.

"Just like animals," said McMichael. "If you're running with a pack of scared dogs, everybody's going to be scared. But if you're running with a bunch of mean ones, all the dogs are going to be mean."

"I've never been on a team that hates to lose as much as this one," said center Jay Hilgenberg.

"Coaching is not getting the best out of the best," said Ditka. "It's getting people who don't have the true talent come up to a level that's going to help your football team. If coaching was putting it on a blackboard and telling a guy to go do it, then that would be easy. Anybody could do it."

Creating a Hero

Only one coach in the world would have put 308-pound William Perry at fullback and that was Ditka. "Bull-headedness meets blind luck," said Ditka.

Defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan was slow to appreciate Perry's defensive talents, so Ditka decided to use him on offense. Even Ditka's offensive coordinator, Ed Hughes, worried aloud about the idea. But while others were making fun, the Bears were soon having fun.

On one magical Monday night against the Packers, Ditka created an American hero that

personified the Bears' season. It was as though Ditka had taken the team mascot off the sideline and breathed life into it. William "The Refrigerator" Perry scored a touchdown and the whole country cheered.

"I think we've put some fun back into football," said Ditka. "I know our opposition is not having a lot of fun."

Ditka's idea to put Perry in the backfield was just his way of giving a kid a chance. It turned out to be more successful than anyone might have imagined.

The same can be said of Ditka's experience as coach of the Bears. George Halas gave him a chance and it turned out to be more successful than anyone might have imagined.

"No question about it, no one else would have hired me," said Ditka. "Too many drawbacks. There's an NFL image you have to be and have to maintain and I probably wasn't it.

"The most hilarious thing about this Perry idea is it busted the staid image in the NFL that all running backs are slender, 6 feet tall, between 185 and 215, and built. This has made a farce out of this. Every underdog in society relates to Perry."

It is hard to think of either Perry or Ditka as an underdog. But growing up, Ditka was so small that his high school coach in Aliquippa, Pa., Carl Aschman, had to talk him out of quitting after his sophomore year on the junior varsity team.

Now, he describes his type of player as "a guy who is going to play tough and aggressive and not give up. I don't like guys taking shortcuts because I think ultimately you have to answer to your teammates."

Under Ditka, the Bears changed their image from losers to winners.

"The rest of the country may be surprised at the job Ditka has done. But it's no surprise at all to those of us who knew him as a teammate and competitor," said former Bears' running back Ronnie Bull.

"I don't want the credit. I just want the wins," said Ditka.

He also wants to give the late George Halas his due.

"People ask me what this all means," he said. "It means one thing, I've repaid a confidence."

3

Stopping 'Em—The Defense

When the 1985 training camp started at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, not even defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan could recognize the Bear defense.

"It wasn't the Bear defense," said safety Gary Fencik.

Missing were middle linebacker Mike Singletary, defensive linemen Dan Hampton, Steve McMichael, Richard Dent, and Tyrone Keys, strong safety Todd Bell, and linebacker Al Harris.

Hampton was injured and the rest of them were holding out for more money. So was the No. 1 draft choice, William "The Refrigerator" Perry.

The Bears were paying the price of success. They had led the National Football League in nearly every important defensive category in 1984, setting a league record for quarterback sacks with 72.

Singletary, Hampton, Dent, and Bell started for the National Football Conference in the Pro Bowl. Coach Mike Ditka said linebacker Otis Wilson should have made it and Fencik and Harris could have made it.

So the salary push was on and Ryan's intricate system was off.

Down To Bare Bones

When Fencik and Wilson joined Hampton on the injury list for part of the preseason, Ryan was down to bare bones. Soon they would have to line up against quarterbacks who might pick them apart—New England's Tony Eason,

Minnesota's Tommy Kramer, Washington's Joe Theismann, San Francisco's Joe Montana, and Green Bay's Lynn Dickey.

Even the optimistic Ditka was worried. "It bothers me. We can't do it without everybody here," said Ditka. "It's like we're running a race and we're missing a leg or an organ. How do you do it? You can't."

Slowly, the players arrived.

Keys signed. Dent came in. McMichael and Perry signed. After two preseason games, Singletary settled his dispute with club president Michael McCaskey.

Hampton, Fencik, and Wilson got healthy and almost all was well. Bell and Harris remained unsigned free agents, eluding the grasp of successful and innovative General Manager Jerry Vainisi.

"The Bears would be crazy to trade either Bell or Harris," said Ryan.

Ryan had called Bell the most valuable player of his 1984 defense, the one man he couldn't afford to lose. He had the speed of a cornerback and the strength of a linebacker and Ryan used both assets to make his defense versatile and effective.

In Bell's place, the Bears started Dave Duerson. In Harris' place, they started Wilber Marshall.

The Backs Come Through

By midseason, the Bears had as many interceptions (21) as they had in all of 1984. Mar-

Finders Keepers: *Defensive Tackle Steve McMichael holds the ball up high after recovering a fumble against Tampa Bay.*

Closing In: *Defensive Tackle Dan Hampton moves in on stumbling Running Back James Wilder at Tampa Bay.*

Top Billing: *Defensive Tackle Steve McMichael crunches Minnesota Quarterback Tommy Kramer. McMichael sacked the quarterback twice in the game.*

Safety Net: *Safety Gary Fencik steals a pass for an interception against Green Bay on Monday Night Football.*

Bear Hugs: *Defensive Tackle Steve McMichael (76) and Safety Gary Fencik stop Green Bay Halfback Eddie Lee Ivery.*

shall had four and Duerson had three to lead the team. The defense did not rank No. 1 in yardage allowed, but they were No. 1 in points allowed. Ditka was no longer worried.

"Yardage doesn't mean beans," said Ditka. "Defense is stopping people when you have to stop them and getting turnovers."

The defense seemed to improve every week as the players learned to choreograph their responsibilities and help each other out.

"I just see us being the perfect defense," said Singletary. "I just see it. We'll be better than last year. When I look at film, sometimes I find it hard to believe we were the No. 1 defense last year.

"I look at the missed tackles and the mistakes and I see room for improvement. I'm looking forward to being not a just good defense, not just the No. 1 defense, but the greatest defense ever to play."

Linebackers Set New Standards

Ryan adjusted his alignments and coverages and loaded down linebackers Singletary, Wilson, and Marshall with responsibility. They

Caged Bear: *Middle Linebacker Mike Singletary keeps a sideline eye on the action.*

responded to their blitzing and coverage duties with sacks, interceptions, and fumble recoveries.

If there was a better trio of linebackers in the league, the Bears didn't know about it.

"We call ourselves the Bermuda Triangle," said Singletary.

"Mike Singletary is the best linebacker in football, no doubt about it," said Ryan. "Nobody else is asked to do all the things he does, plus run the defense."

It's Up Front that Counts

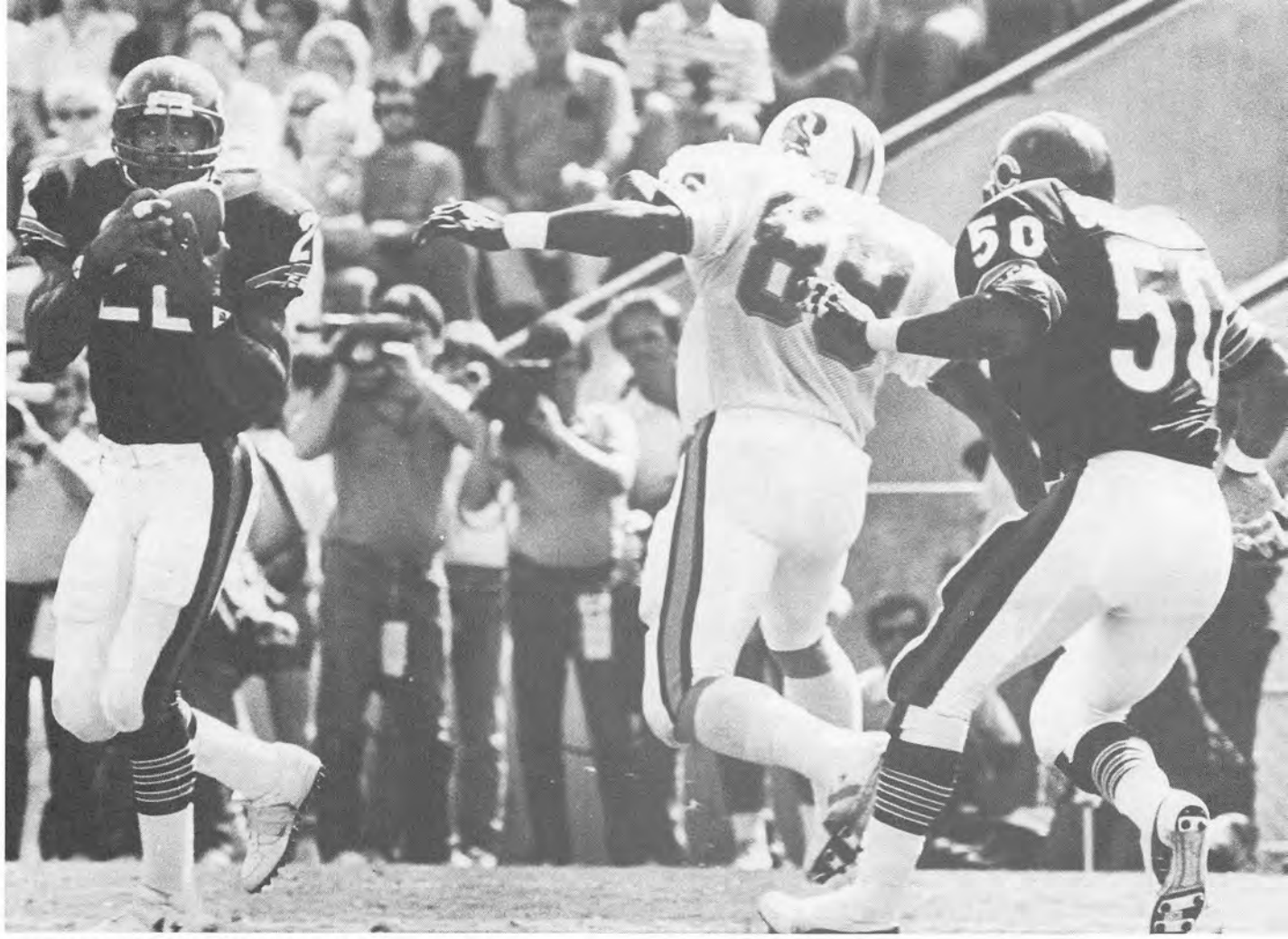
Up front, Hampton's rehabilitated leg got stronger every week. McMichael became the latest Pro Bowl candidate with steady, often-spectacular play. Dent forced fumbles and applied instant pressure with quickness that scared opposing tackles into playing illegally off the line of scrimmage. Perry got into the starting lineup by midseason and soon required double team blocking.

In game 10, the defense held the Detroit Lions to 106 yards. "The guys up front made our job easy," said Duerson, who picked off another interception.

The absence of Bell and Harris made the defense thinner, but it didn't seem to make it any weaker. With cornerbacks Mike Richardson and Leslie Frazier backed by two promising rookies, No. 2 draft choice Reggie Phillips and free agent Ken Taylor, Ryan had more depth at a vulnerable spot.

The sincerest form of flattery was the number of teams around the league trying to copy Ryan's scheme. Pressuring the quarterback always has been at the root of Ryan's philosophy.

Buddy's System: *Defensive Coach Buddy Ryan confers with Wilber Marshall on the sidelines at Tampa Bay.*



Duerson Does: *Safety Dave Duerson steals a piece of the action intercepting a pass intended for Tampa Bay.*

If rules make it easier to pass, blitzers, and pass rushers had to make it harder. If necessary, Ryan would send 11 rushers after the passer.

When it works, it is devastating. When it fails, it is susceptible to big plays. For the Bears, it works more than it fails because Ryan has outstanding athletes to make it work. When he puts a linebacker under the gun in one-on-one coverage against a running back or a tight end, Ryan can be reasonably sure that his guy can win the battle.

"Other teams can't do the same things because they don't have the personnel. And nobody knows the defense better than Buddy," said Ditka.

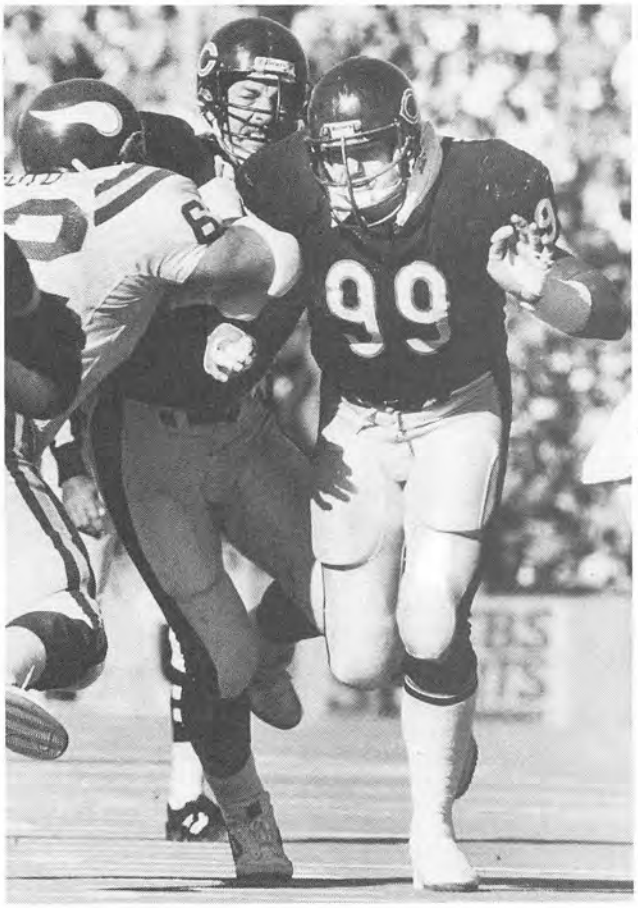
Marshall Law: *Linebacker Wilber Marshall nails Fullback Jessie Clark of Green Bay.*

55 Alive: *Linebacker Otis Wilson celebrates a sack with a holler and a raised fist.*

Two-Pointer: *Defensive Tackle Steve McMichael sacks Green Bay Quarterback Jim Zorn for a safety in the 4th quarter.*

Head Stand: *Middle Linebacker Mike Singletary (50) and Safety Gary Fencik (45) upend Tampa Bay Running Back James Wilder.*

Disposable Pack: *Defensive Tackle Dan Hampton (99) sacks Green Bay's Quarterback Jim Zorn (18) as Linebacker Wilber Marshall moves in.*



Run for Cover: *San Francisco Quarterback Joe Montana ran for his life against the Bears. Here he's pressured by Defensive End Mike Hartenstine.*

Rude Dudes: *Defensive Tackle Dan Hampton (99) and Defensive End Mike Hartenstine force a pass as they rush in against the Vikings.*

Pressure Cooker: *Defensive Tackle Dan Hampton invades Quarterback Jim Zorn's space at Green Bay.*

Redfaced Redskin: *Quarterback Joe Theismann is forced to punt and squibs a one yarder to help set up a Bears touchdown.*

Gottcha: *Defensive End Mike Hartenstine nails San Francisco Fullback Roger Craig (33).*

Bear/Skin Rug: *Redskins Running Back George Rogers stops short when he collides with the Bears' defense.*

Going Down: *Tampa Bay Quarterback Steve DeBerg is not pleased to see Defensive End Richard Dent and Linebacker Otis Wilson in this opening game blitz.*

Stride Right: *Cornerback Mike Richardson (27) tails 49er's Wide Receiver Jerry Rice (80).*

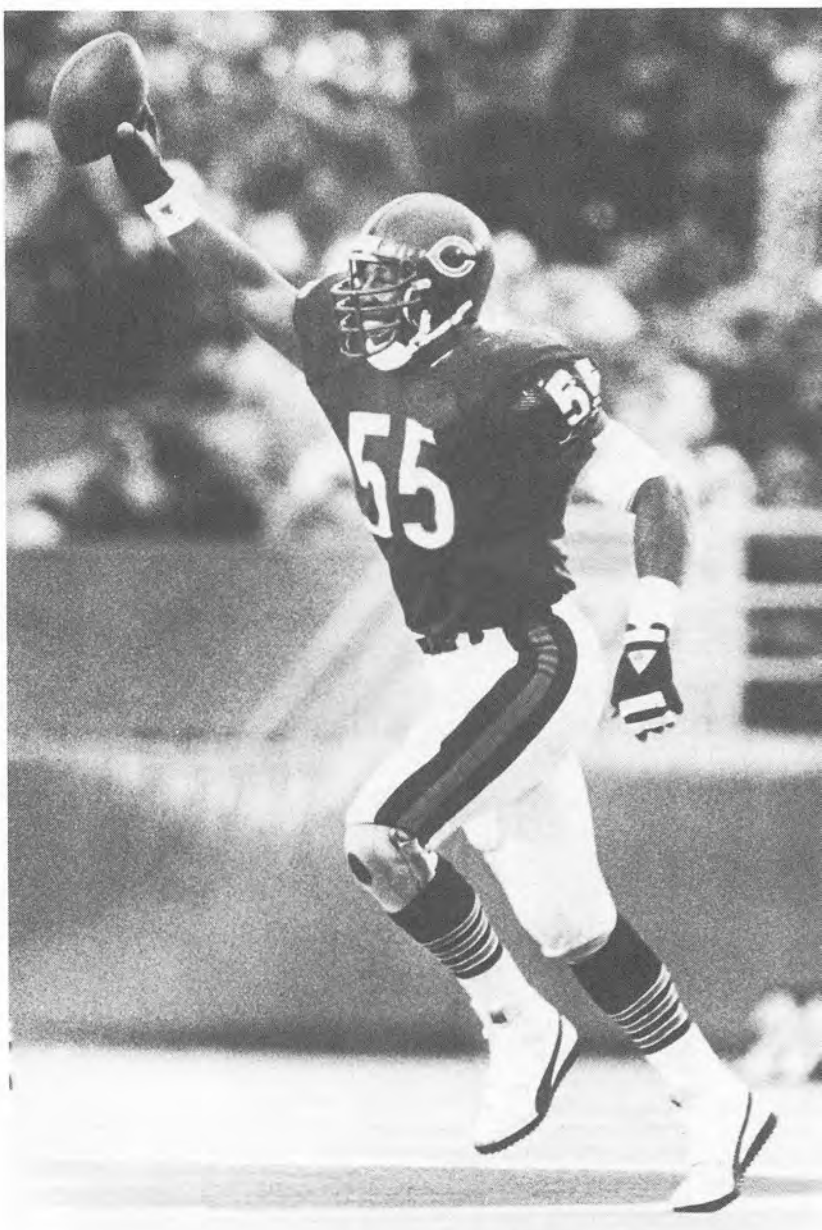
Cry Uncle: *Defensive Tackle Steve McMichael (76) sacks Redskin Quarterback Joe Theismann.*

Pickled Packer: *First they stick Packer Running Back Eddie Lee Ivery for a loss, then Safety Gary Fencik and Middle Linebacker Mike Singletary (50) immediately spot the yard marker to make sure the first down is denied.*

Pressure Sensitive: *Patriot and former Illinois Quarterback Tony Eason barely gets the pass off as Defensive End Richard Dent and Defensive Tackle Dan Hampton apply pressure.*

Come and Get It: *Middle Linebacker Mike Singletary displays his all-pro glare against the Detroit Lions.*

Here It Is: *Linebacker Otis Wilson holds aloft the football after his fourth quarter interception gave the Bears the ball on Detroit's 42 yard line.*



Towering 95: *Defensive End Richard Dent upends Green Bay's Quarterback Randy Wright.*

Bear Trap: *Cornerback Leslie Frazier (21) closes in on Viking Running Back Darrin Nelson, as Defensive End Richard Dent (95) grabs him from behind.*

95
UECKER
20

4

Goal to Go—The Offense

When the Bears beat the San Francisco 49ers 26-10 in game six, they did more than raise their remarkable record to 6-0. They answered a challenge and made good on a promise.

When the Bears lost the 1984 National Football Conference title game to the 49ers 23-0, leaving them one win short of Super Bowl XIX, coach Mike Ditka made one vow.

"We'll have a passing game from now on," said Ditka.

"The 49ers told us to come back when we had an offense," said tackle Jimbo Covert. "We remembered to pack our offense this time."

With Walter Payton running, the Bear offense of 1984 had led the league in ball control to help the defense lead the league in practically everything.

But the Bear offense was 16th in the league in scoring. When the Bears got behind, they had trouble catching up.

At Last: Some Balance

A healthy Jim McMahon at quarterback helped cure the offensive ills. So did a perfect balance of running and passing, laced with just enough chicanery to keep opposing defenses on their heels.

McMahon's presence improved a passing game that sputtered under the direction of five different starting quarterbacks in 1984. McMahon's ability to call audibles to exploit defenses produced immediate results.

The Bears came from behind in five of their first seven victories, during which McMahon passed for 10 touchdowns.

The Bears were leading the league in scoring and McMahon was leading the league in pass-

High Fives: *New England Safety Fred Marion intercepts a pass intended for Wide Receiver Ken Margerum.*

ing. Flanker Dennis McKinnon had six touchdown catches.

Hey, Look At Us

The Bears looked downright fancy, for heaven's sake.

Offensive coordinator Ed Hughes threw in a number of gimmicks to completely befuddle defenses. As if stopping McMahon and Payton weren't enough, other teams had to worry about flea-flickers, shovel passes, reverses, and a Refrigerator on wheels, William Perry.

When Payton threw a touchdown pass to McMahon during a 45-10 victory over the Washington Redskins, fans thought they had seen it all. But after Perry scored by running and catching against the Packers, Hughes revealed he had more bizarre ideas up his sleeve.

Six Kicks: *Placekicker Kevin Butler rejoices after connecting on a 25-yard field goal against Minnesota.*

"How about a guy 6-foot-7? Give him the ball and he falls forward for two yards. Tyrone Keys over the top," said Hughes.

At 6 feet, 7 inches, defensive lineman Keys is the Bears' tallest player.

The unusual plays worked only because the Bears' were unusually good in other areas. Their first game provided confidence under unusual circumstances.

The defense fell embarrassingly behind the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 21-7 in the first half, but with the help of an interception return for a touchdown by cornerback Leslie Frazier, the offense showed the defense it had arrived.

"We knew our offense could come back," said linebacker Otis Wilson.

McMahon completed a career high 23 passes in 34 attempts. He still had time to hand off 17 times to Payton. He gave to other runners 13 times and kept it 4 times himself. The perfect balance of 34 passes and 34 runs kept the Bucs off balance. It was not planned, but it was appreciated.

Not since 1971 had a Bears' quarterback completed 23 passes and won. On the same day, both Super Bowl XIX teams, the 49ers and Dolphins, lost their openers. It was the first sign of changing times.

Defenses were slow to challenge the Bears' changes. They kept stacking and blitzing to stop Payton, defying McMahon to pass to outside receivers McKinnon and Willie Gault.

"The thing we're doing better that we couldn't do a year ago is we couldn't challenge people when they blitzed us," said Ditka. "We can do that now. A lot of the adjustments people make against us I don't think are sound."

"Last year, we scored early and we let the defense come in and play tough," said Jay Hilgenberg. "This year, we're a different team. We're better in every phase."

The most effective improvement was in the area of audibles. Ditka and Hughes allowed McMahon more leeway to change plays to take advantage of certain defenses.

McMahon was so good, it was eerie.

After the Bears beat the Redskins 45-10, tight end Emery Moorehead was watching his 10-yard touchdown catch on a television replay and noticed something unusual.

"I could hear Jim calling the audible before the strong safety showed that he was going to blitz," said Moorehead. "So I asked Jim, 'How could you call the audible before the guy moved up?

"He said, 'I could see it in his eyes.'"

McMahon's first two touchdown passes against the Washington Redskins were on audibles on a day when he called more audibles than he ever had before.

"He audibled two audibles that I don't even think we've ever audibled to, but he knew what to look for," said Ditka.

The rest of the Bears were good enough to look and listen for audibles, too.

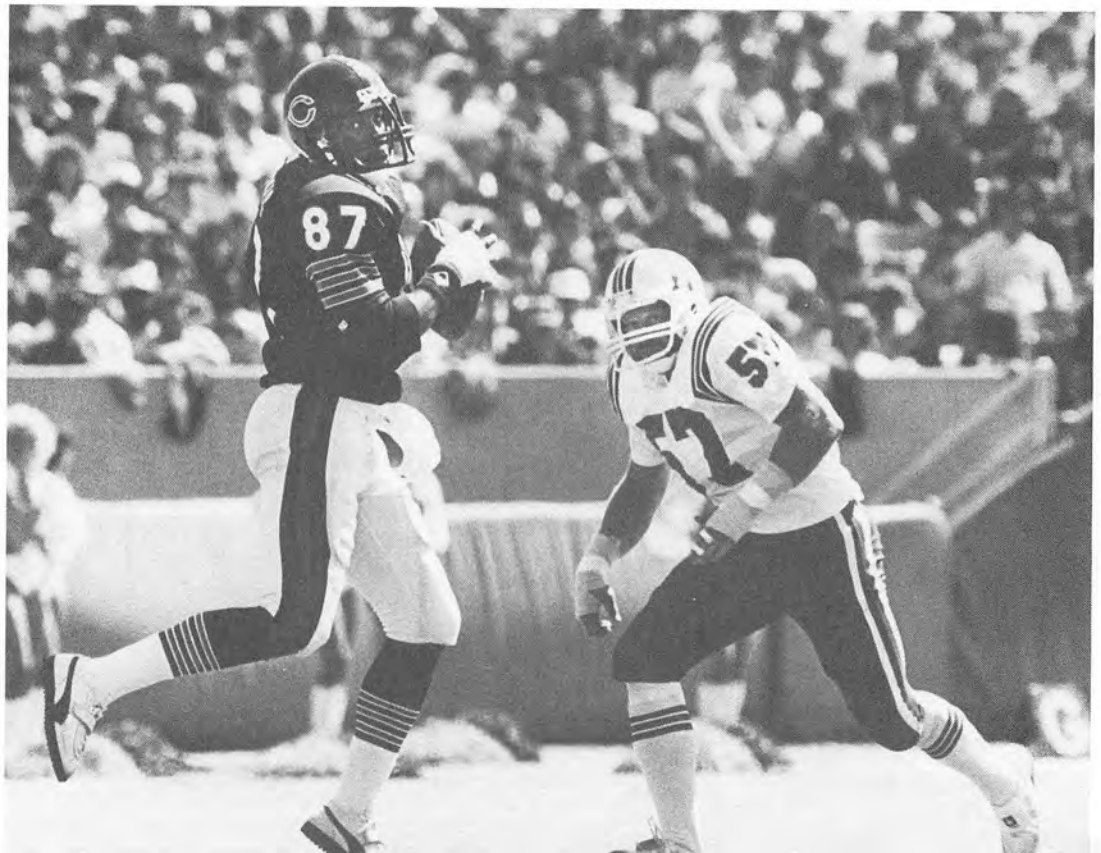
Against the Minnesota Vikings, when an injured McMahon came off the bench to replace starter Steve Fuller, they didn't even have to talk to each other to make McMahon's first play work.

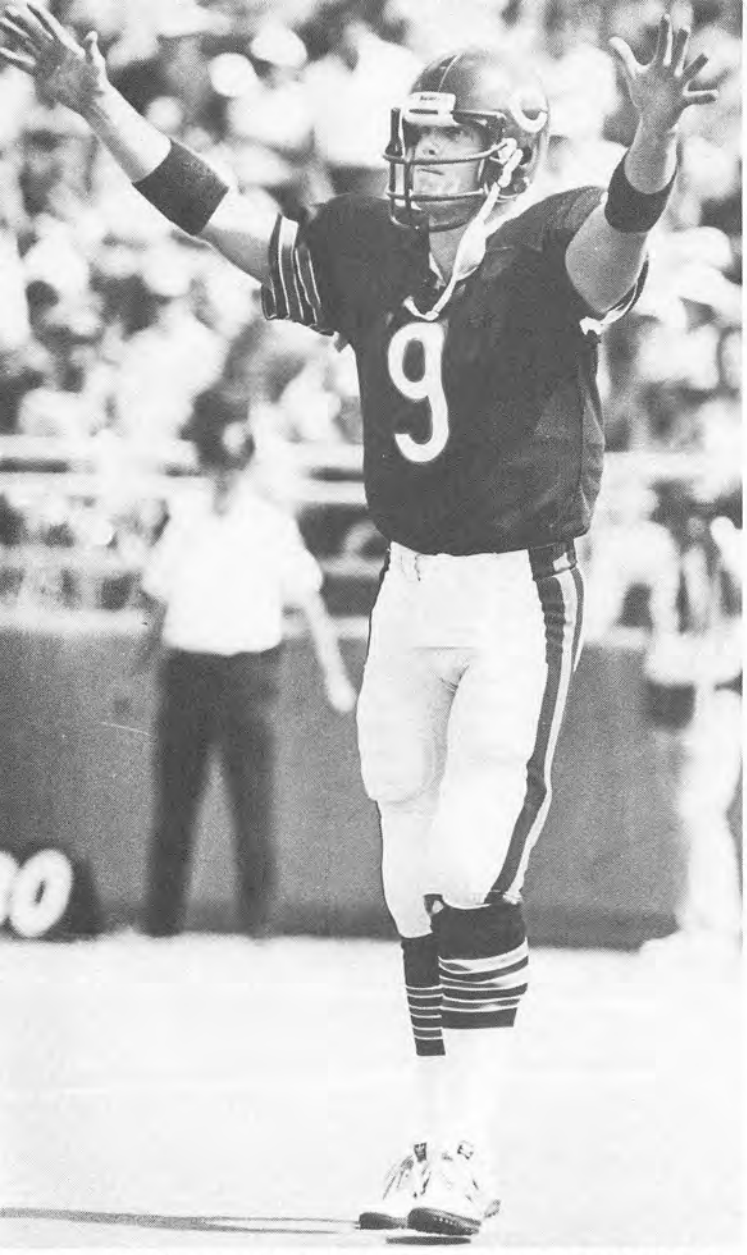
It was supposed to be a screen pass to full-

Pat on Back: *Tight End Tim Wrightman grabs a pass for a first down against the Patriots.*

Bail Out: *Punter Maury Buford (8) punts under pressure from Green Bay.*

Clutch Cargo: *Tight End Emery Moorehead comes up with a big 20-yard reception in the 2nd quarter against the Patriots.*





Praise Be: *Quarterback Jim McMahon exults in a touchdown toss to Wide Receiver Dennis McKinnon at the Tampa Bay opener.*

Power Drill: *Running Back Matt Suhey makes a big gain during a two-minute drill against the Vikings.*

Fuller Brush: *Back-up Quarterback Steve Fuller unloads as Viking defenders close in.*

Gault Won't Halt: *Wide Receiver Willie Gault puts a move on Redskin Cornerback Barry Wilburn on his way to a 99-yard kickoff touchdown return.*

Close Encounters: *Wide Receiver Ken Margerum (82) pays his respects to Willie Gault (83). Gault went all the way on a kickoff return against the Redskins.*

Keeping Cool: *Offensive Tackle Keith Van Horne winds down at the Tampa Bay opener.*

Fresh Air: *Guard Kurt Becker takes a breather in the intense heat of the Tampa Bay opener.*

back Matt Suhey. But McMahon saw a safety blitzing. So did Payton, who blocked him. So did Gault, who turned his pattern upfield and caught a perfect bomb from McMahon for a 70-yard touchdown.

Just as defenses became wary of McMahon's passing skills, Payton started ripping off 100-yard games with his usual regularity.

The Bears proved they could still be the league's most effective grind-it-out team against the Detroit Lions, when both Payton and Suhey reached 100 yards with McMahon sitting on the bench. Fuller was the quarterback and the Bears also rested receivers Moorehead and McKinnon for most of the game.

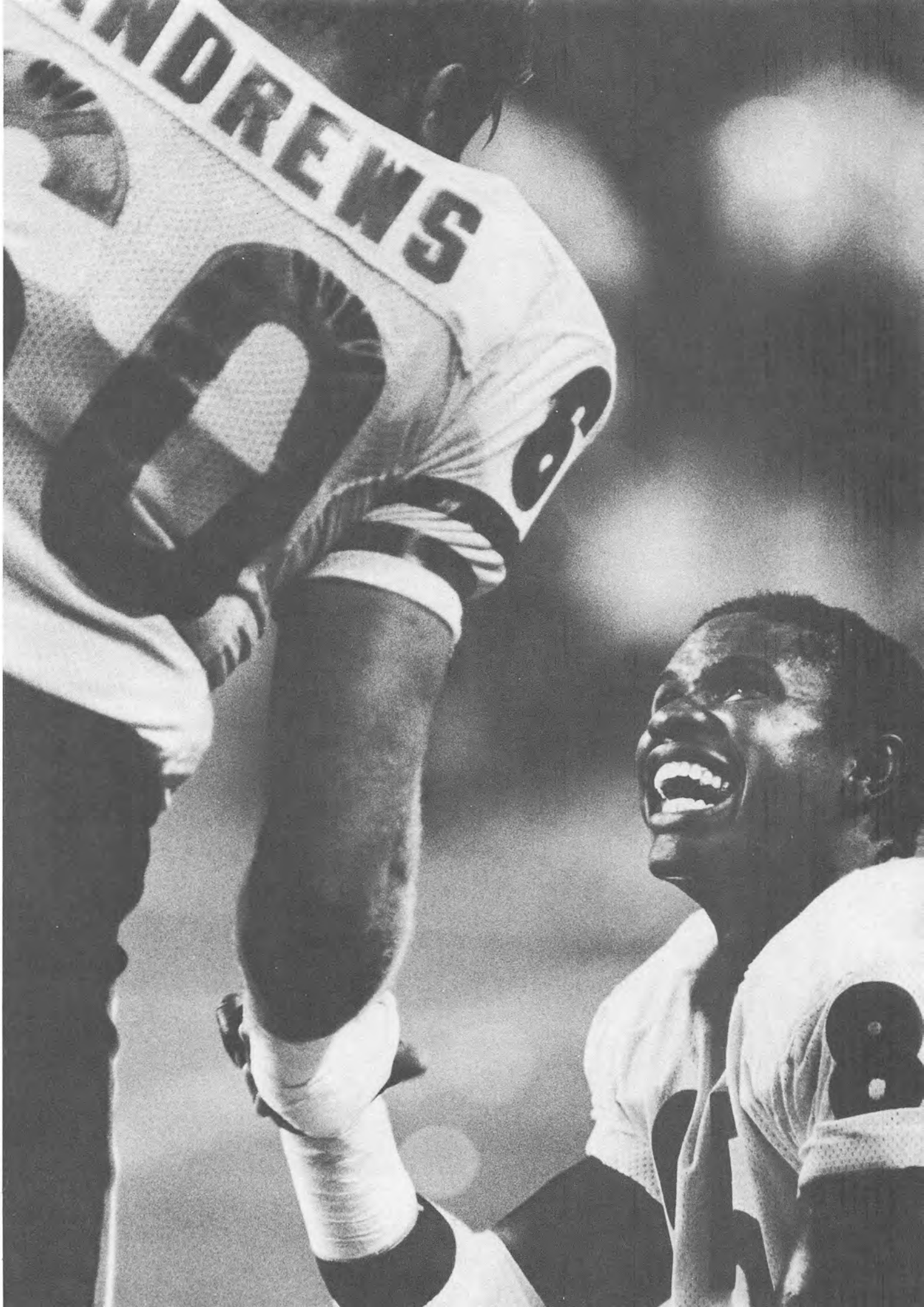
The circumstances brought the offensive linemen to center stage and they proved worthy of the spotlight. Tackles Jimbo Covert and Keith Van Horne, guards Mark Bortz and Tom Thayer, center Hilgenberg and tight end Tim Wrightman banged out huge holes for Payton and Suhey. Reserve Ken Margerum caught the only pass by a wide receiver, but his blocking also helped the Bears manhandle the Lions.

"It's gratifying to design something and have it worked like you planned," said Ditka. "It doesn't always work out that way."

Pass Time: *Wide Receiver Dennis McKinnon is all eyes as he scores on a 32-yard pass from Jim McMahon on the opening drive of the game against the Patriots.*

It's Six: *Running Back Calvin Thomas makes it look easy as he scampers virtually untouched into the Detroit end zone for a 7 yard touchdown run.*

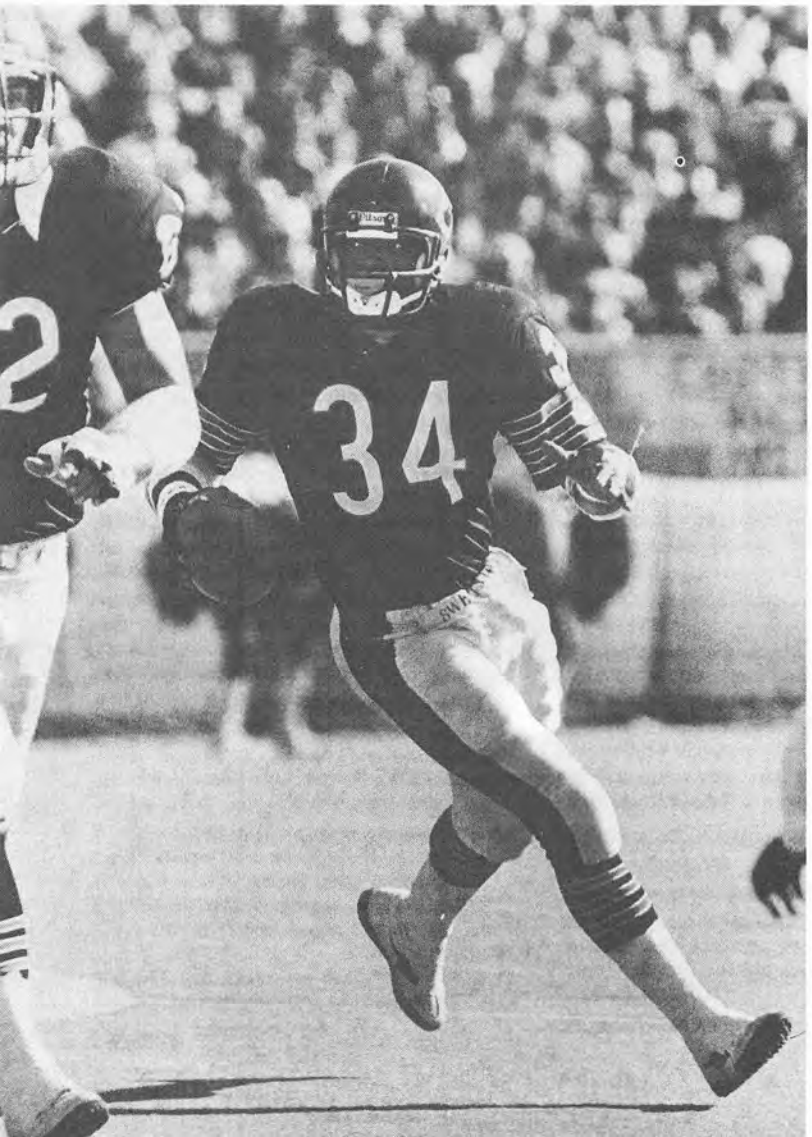
Smilin' Wide: *Jubilation is all over Wide Receiver Dennis McKinnon's face as he accepts Tackle/Center Tom Andrews' congratulations for a touchdown grab against Minnesota.*


NDREWS

Tee Time: *Placekicker Kevin Butler shows the form that has made his rookie season outstanding. At one stretch he went 9 for 9.*

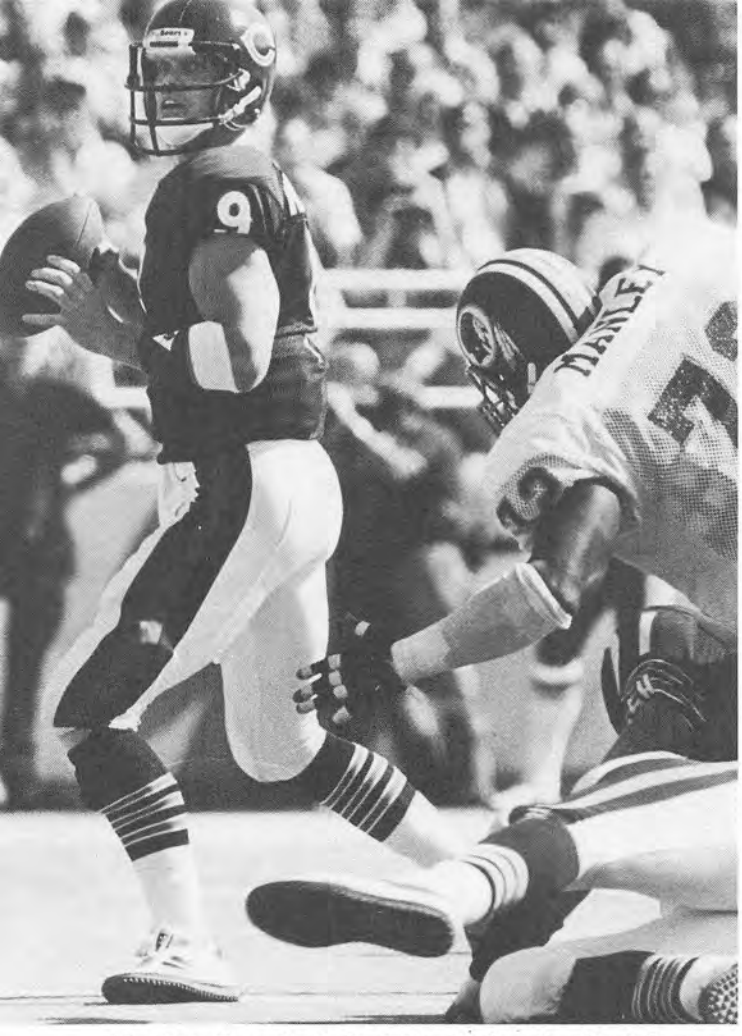
"If we play like we can play, ain't nobody who can beat us," said McMahon. "I don't mean we can just show up. I mean if we execute, we can beat anybody. We believe that now. Maybe last year we had some doubts. But not anymore, I don't think. We've got that kind of confidence now."

"Our offense respects our defense and our defense respects our offense," said Ditka.

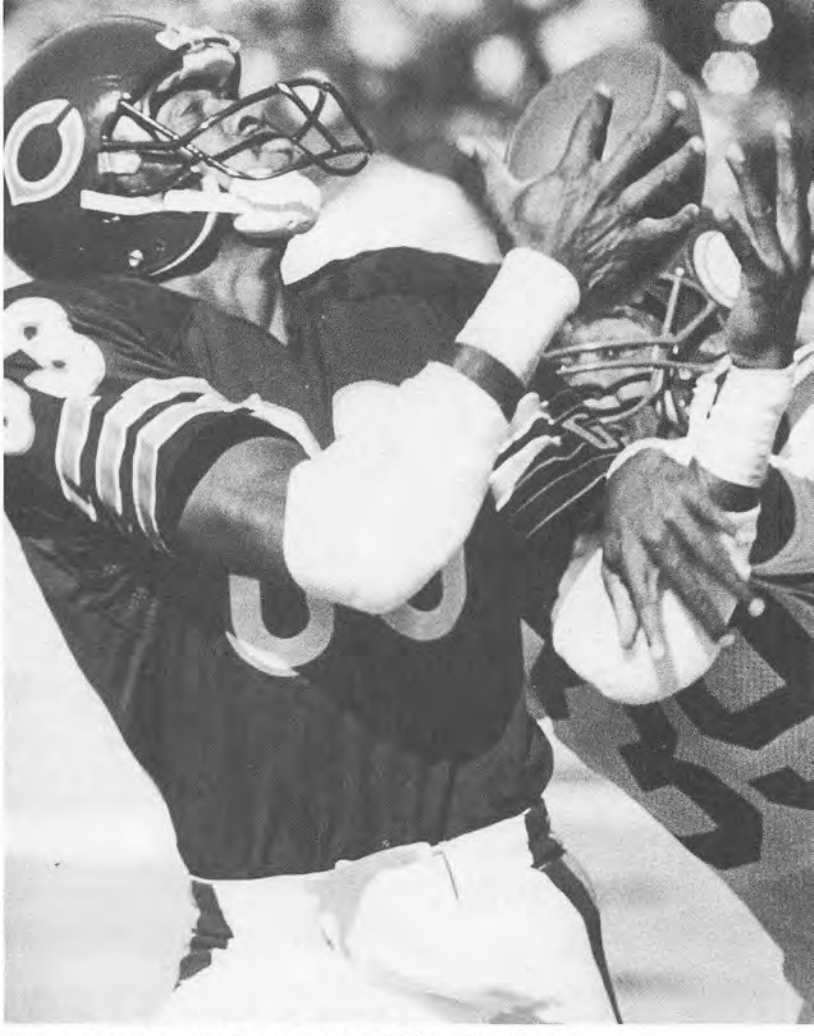


Born to Run: *Payton versus the Vikings . . . following his blocks, finding his hole, making his move.*

It's Cold Outside: *Offensive Backfield Coach Johnny Roland uses the gloves-on-approach as he writes up his notes on the sidelines during the Detroit game. Wind and rain didn't stop the Bears from a 24 to 3 victory without using Jim McMahon.*

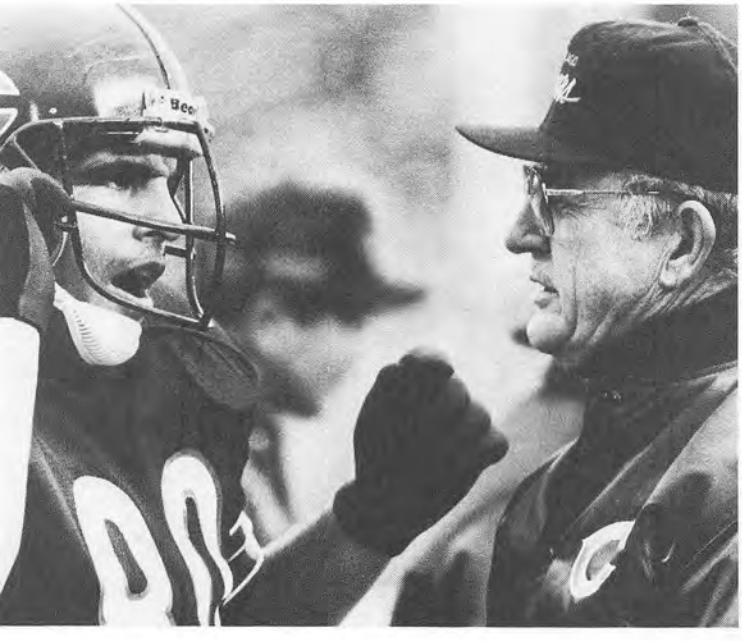


Manley Handled: *Redskin Defensive End Dexter Manley (72) is taken out by Offensive Tackle Andy Frederick. Quarterback Jim McMahon has plenty of time to throw.*

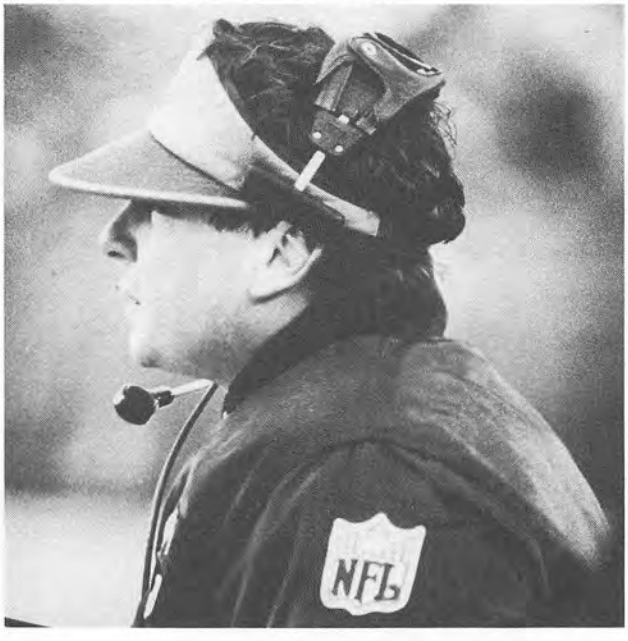


Arm Wrestle: *Wide Receiver Willie Gault runs into some interference from the Vikings.*

Next Time: *Tight End Time Wrightman tells Offensive Line Coach Dick Stanfel what Detroit's defense is up to.*



Kamikaze Man:
Coach Steve Kazor watches his specialty teams do their thing against Detroit.



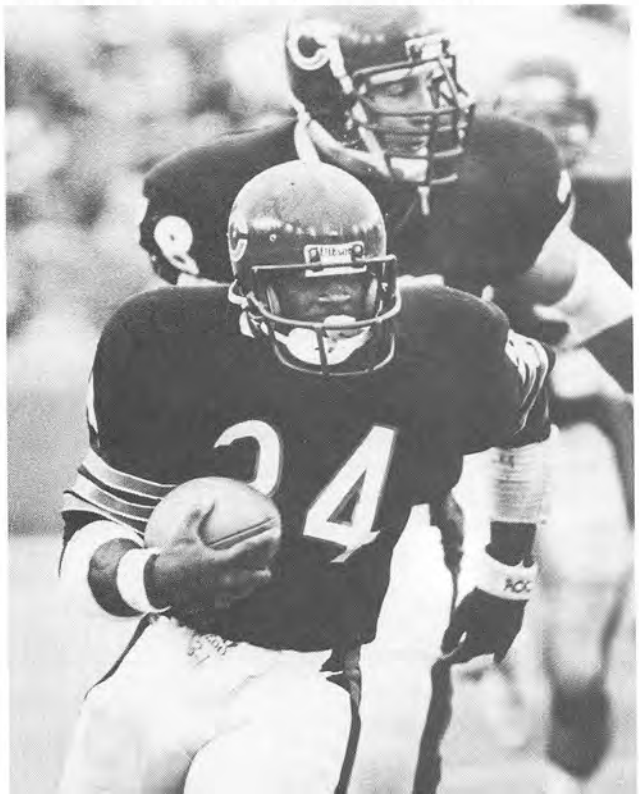
Big Play: *Tight End Tim Wrightman takes a Steve Fuller pass for a critical 23 yard gain that kept a touchdown drive going against Detroit.*

Way to Go: *A bundled-up Jim McMahon congratulates Placekicker Kevin Butler after Kevin's successful 39 yard field goal in the fourth quarter against Detroit.*

Close Doesn't Count: *Backup Quarterback Steve Fuller eludes Detroit's Bill Gay on his way to a critical pass completion to Tight End Tim Wrightman.*

Three's A Crowd: *It takes three Detroit Lions to bring Running Back Matt Suhey to turf. Matt's glitzy stats against the Lions: 102 yards rushing in 16 carries.*

Ah Sweetness: *One more 100-yard day rushing (102), a bunch of devasting blocks, 4 receptions for 69 yards—another day at the office for All Everything Walter Payton.*



Covert Activity: *Offensive Tackle Jim Covert jams up two Patriot linemen just long enough for placekicker Kevin Butler to get off his field goal attempt.*

5

McMayhem

To describe Jim McMahon as football's first punk rock quarterback might not be entirely accurate. But to lump him as another pretty passer from Brigham Young is even farther off the mark.

McMahon only looks and plays like a punker. To his wife, Nancy, and his two small children, Ashley and Sean, McMahon is a long way from Sid Vicious.

McMahon was the man most responsible for turning the Chicago Bears into the National Football League's hottest team in 1985-86. They called him McMagic after he came off the bench on national television early in the season and threw touchdown passes on his first, second, and seventh attempts against the Minnesota Vikings.

McMayhem is another way to describe McMahon's approach to football. He would rather tackle a quarterback than be one. Sunglasses, a spiked hairdo, and a personality that got him ranked fourth "cockiest" player in the league in a poll of 200 colleagues combine to paint a wild picture that he encourages but not always endorses.

"People say, 'You mean he has kids?'" said his wife.

Not Quite a Choir Boy

In his fourth season out of Brigham Young, where he was neither a Mormon nor a Tabernacle Choirboy, McMahon's only goal for 1985 was to endure. He spent half of the 1984 season sidelined with various injuries including a lacerated kidney. The Bears got to the NFC title game without him. With him, their hopes were high before they played a game.

"If I stay healthy, everything else will fall into place," he said.

Trouble is, McMahon has a penchant for fall-

McMagic: *Quarterback Jim McMahon came off the bench in the third quarter and racked up three touchdown passes to give the Bears the lead and a win against the Vikings in a Thursday night game.*

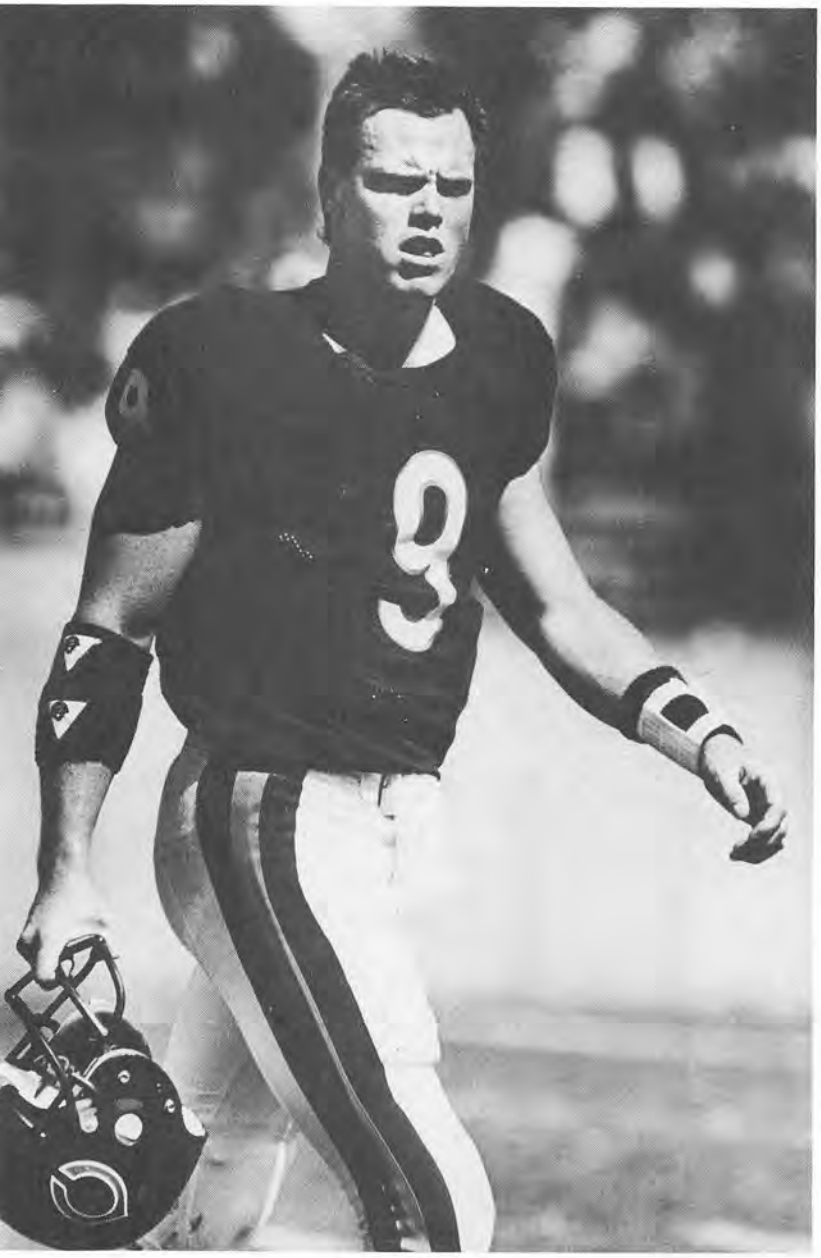
ELSHIRE
73

ing into places where ordinary quarterbacks fear to tread.

For instance, Coach Mike Ditka has been trying to get him to slide down at the end of scrambles like normal quarterbacks do. McMahon slides head first instead of feet first.

In 1984, McMahon broke his throwing hand when he was hit while standing in the pocket. So he sees no sense in trying to be extra careful.

Mac's Back: Quarterback Jim McMahon takes the field at the Tampa Bay opener. Bears win—38-28.



"There's no safe place on the field," said McMahon.

Truth be known, that's the way both McMahon and Ditka like it.

"This is not a game for timid people," said McMahon.

Ditka's motto is: "Ask no quarter; give no quarter." That includes quarterbacks. The Bears play football the way it was intended when pads were invented. The Bears wouldn't be the Bears with a pansy at quarterback.

"I don't like all the rules about you can't hit quarterbacks. Jack Lambert had the right idea when he said to put dresses on them all. Most of the quarterbacks don't like to get hit. Better not play this game if you don't want to get hit. I don't mind getting hit," said McMahon.

"I like pain at times."

Pain makes McMahon angry, he said, and anger psyches him up.

"You've got to be in a ticked off mood to play this game," he said.

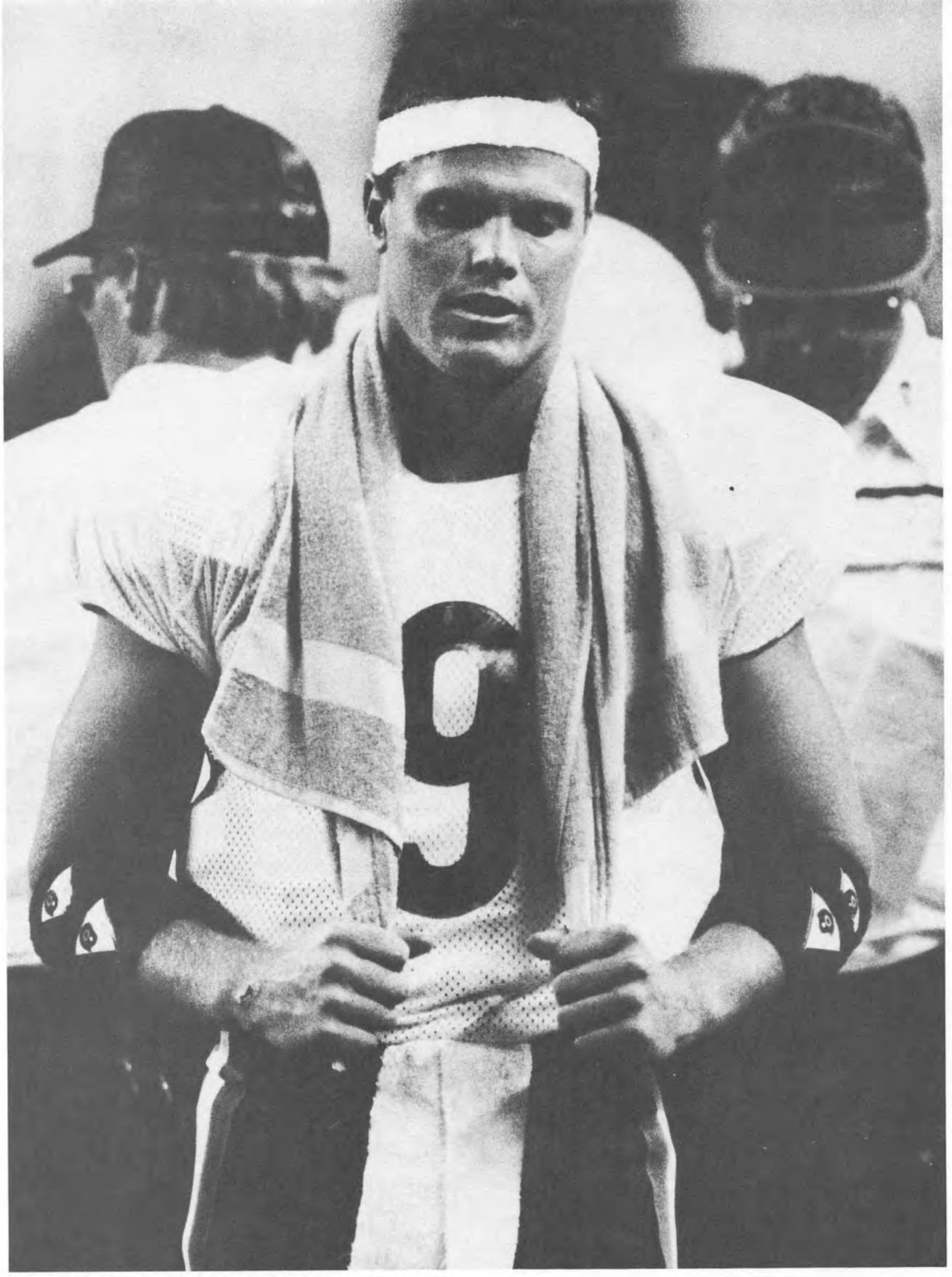
He Didn't Major in Spirals

McMahon would prefer to be an offensive lineman, "if I had a fat butt." He hangs around linemen so much that he sometimes throws the football like one. At Brigham Young, he didn't major in spirals.

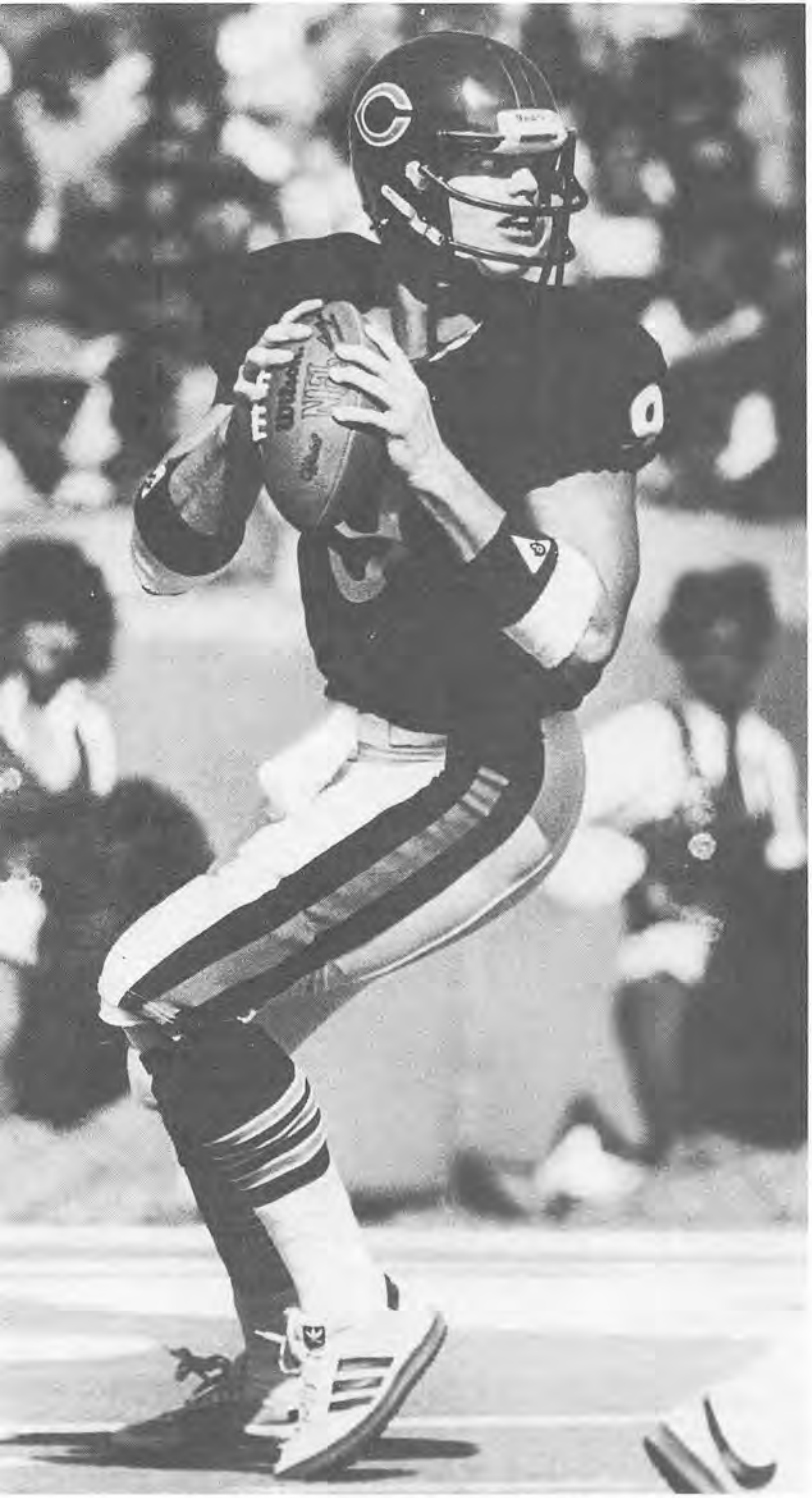
"The ball just goes like that for me," he said.

If it gets there, that's all that matters. Ditka says McMahon is like Bobby Layne. He is also like Ditka. They hate to lose. Sometimes Ditka can barely coax McMahon off the field in time for a field goal attempt.

McMahon's teammates love him, not only for his ability but for his leadership and his friendship. It is not always easy to be both leader and friend. McMahon is one of the boys until he calls



Dry Docked: *Jim McMahon is upset during the first half of the Viking game when Coach Mike Ditka didn't start him because of the quarterback's leg infection and back spasms.*



***Famous Form:** Quarterback Jim McMahon versus the Redskins, about to uncoil. The Bears dominated the game, winning 45-10.*

the huddle to order. As a rookie, he snapped at veterans on more than one occasion, earning instant respect. After all, he was more than a rookie; he was right.

At a training camp meeting, McMahon commandeered a projector and mimicked coaches before they arrived, pointing out errors to teammates.

"It was very humorous, but he was good. He knows what he's talking about," said receiver Ken Margerum.

Ditka wasn't always sure about McMahon's dedication or his knowledge. McMahon is not the greatest practice player. Ditka thought he should concentrate more during the week and spend time watching film. Then Ditka discoverd that McMahon has his own way of assimilating knowledge.

"Mike saw (Roger) Staubach do it a certain way. I'm not him. I'm Jim McMahon," said McMahon.

Ditka found out McMahon could turn his mind into a film projector.

"When he hears something, he visualizes it," said Ditka.

He was hurt the week before the Minnesota game, which was why he didn't start. Instead of spending the week's first practice in the huddle or in the film room, he sat in the bleachers and visited with ABC commentator Joe Namath, one of his boyhood idols.

The Bears allowed McMahon to call more audibles this year. Offensive coordinator Ed Hughes was amazed by the results.

"He doesn't miss many. He's brilliant," said Hughes.

On one touchdown pass, McMahon called the audible before the safety showed blitz. Instinct.

Behind the Shades

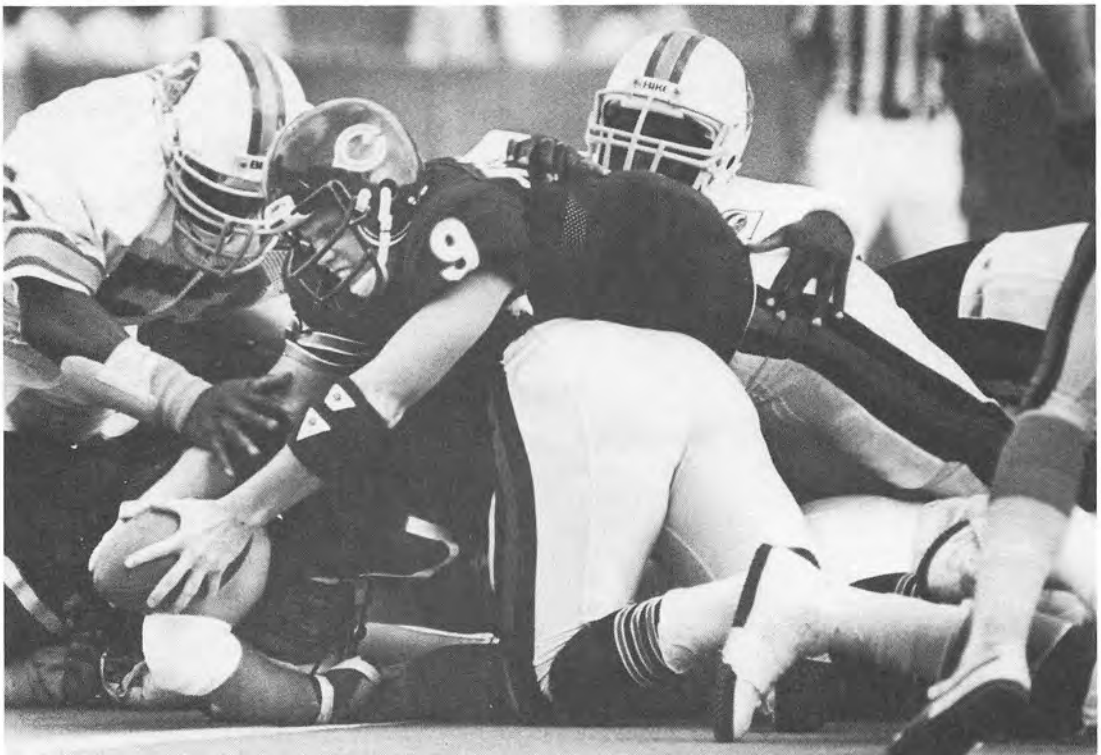
People rarely see McMahon's eyes through his colorful array of sunglasses, which either add or detract to his image, depending on your point of view.

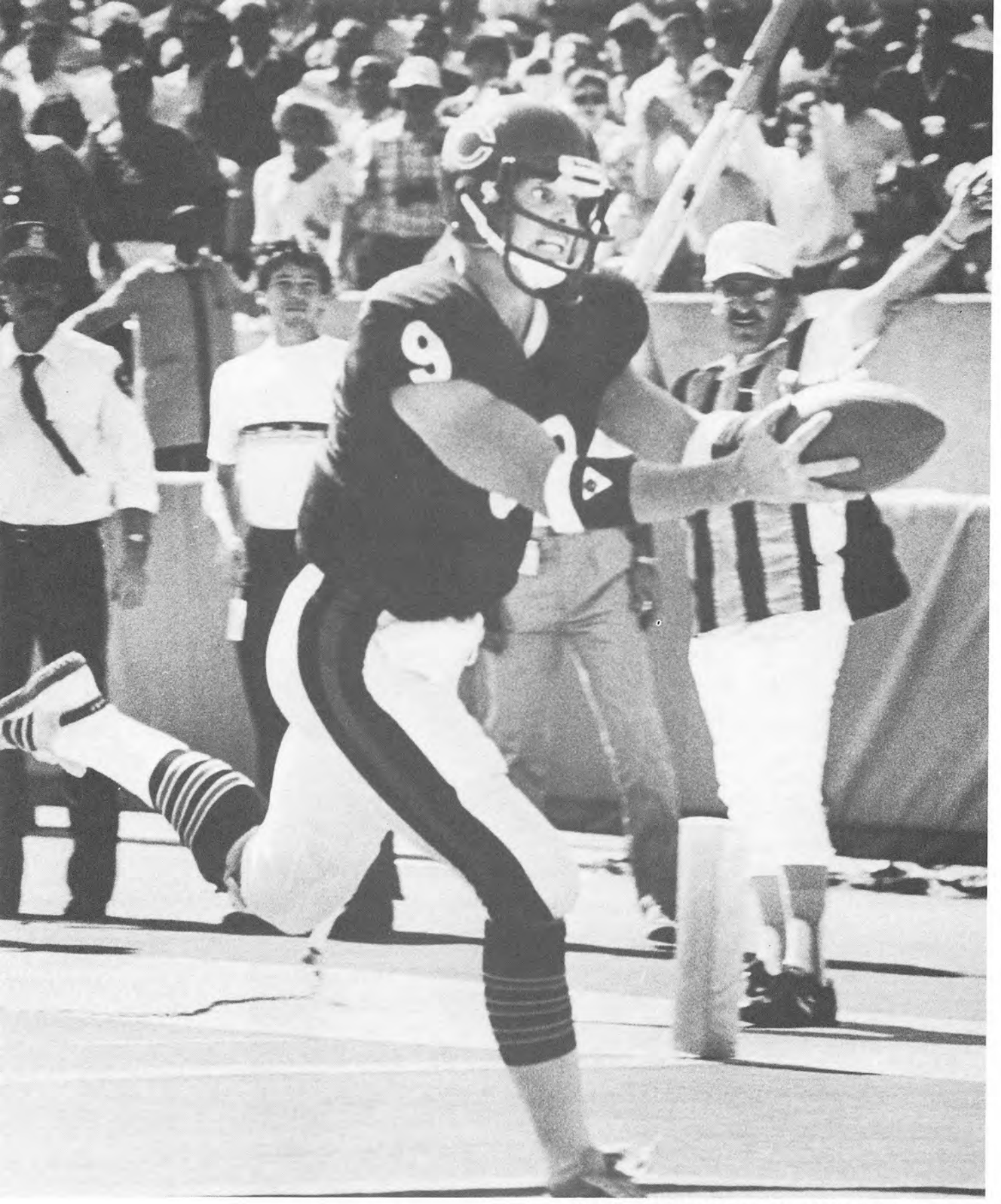
"I get mail all the time saying, "You disgust me,'" said McMahon.

The shades are practical as well as fashionable. When McMahon was 6 years old and play-

Escort Service: *Smiling Quarterback Jim McMahon (9) rolls out on his way to a touchdown pass against Tampa Bay while Guard Kurt Becker (79) protects.*

Reach Out: *And touch down. Quarterback Jim McMahon (9) pushes the ball over the goal line for a TD against Tampa Bay.*





Here's the Catch: *In a rare turnabout, Quarterback Jim McMahon catches a pass from Walter Payton for a touchdown.*

ing cowboys and Indians with his brother, he was trying to untie a knot in the leather string tying his holster to his legs. He was using a fork to do it. The fork slipped and stabbed him in the right eye. As a result, his pupil is permanently dilated, which makes him sensitive to bright light.

The injury does not affect McMahon's vision on a football field. "I can see 100 yards. That's all I need," he said.

At training camp before the season, McMahon decided he needed a haircut. It is not clear whether his hair was too long or his patience too short. McMahon had spare time, so he borrowed Receiver Willie Gault's hair clippers.

"I just kept trimming and trimming and it kept getting worse and worse," said McMahon. McMahon enlisted Gault's help. "After laughing for 15 minutes, I tried to fix it," said Gault.

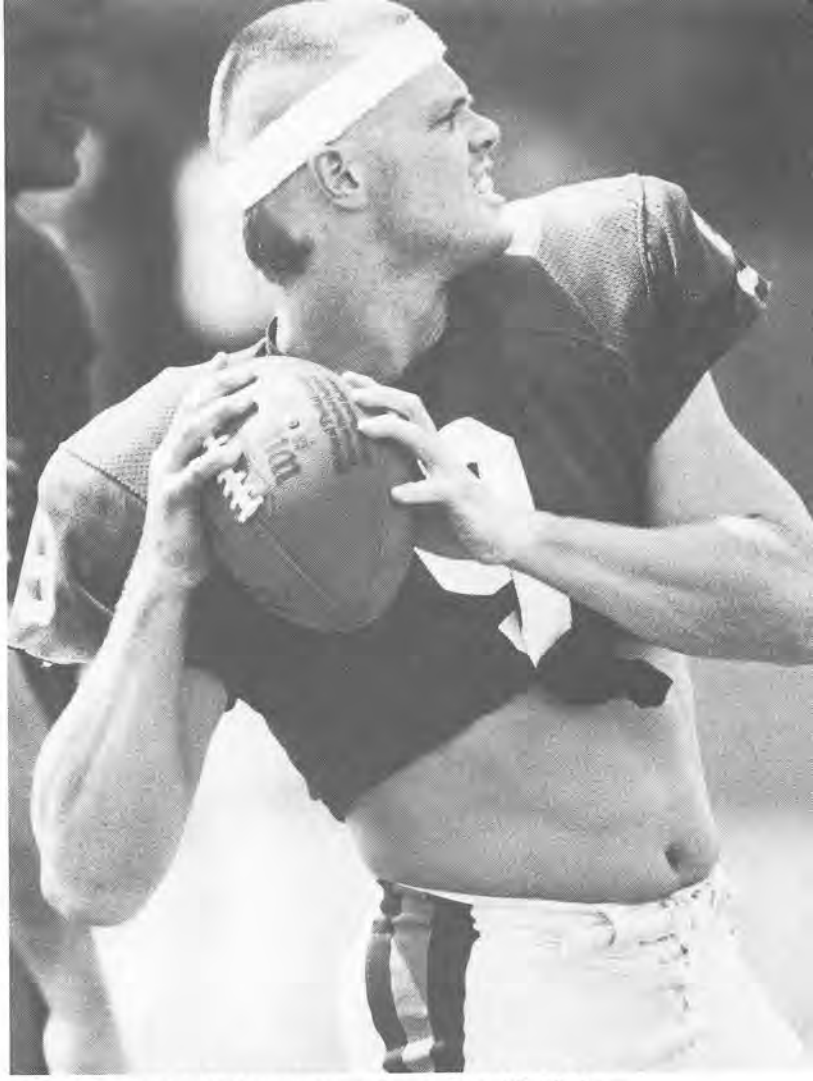
The sides were whitewalls. The top was a Mohawk. The tail end was still long. McMahon apologized to his wife on television. She had been the family barber. "I knew he was ready for the insane asylum, " said roommate Kurt Becker, a guard.

His teammates wondered about him in 1984, too, when he suffered the lacerated kidney. But this was the kind of wonder that turns to awe. McMahon was hurt before the half, yet started the second half.

"We went in for halftime and he was hurt then," said Becker. "And he came out for the second half and we actually had to tell him to get the heck out of the huddle. The guy had given all he could. I mean he couldn't even talk. His kidney was ruptured or whatever. He was gasping for air and in intense pain. Yet he still wanted to be out there. Everybody was going, 'You gotta get out of here. Something ain't right.'"

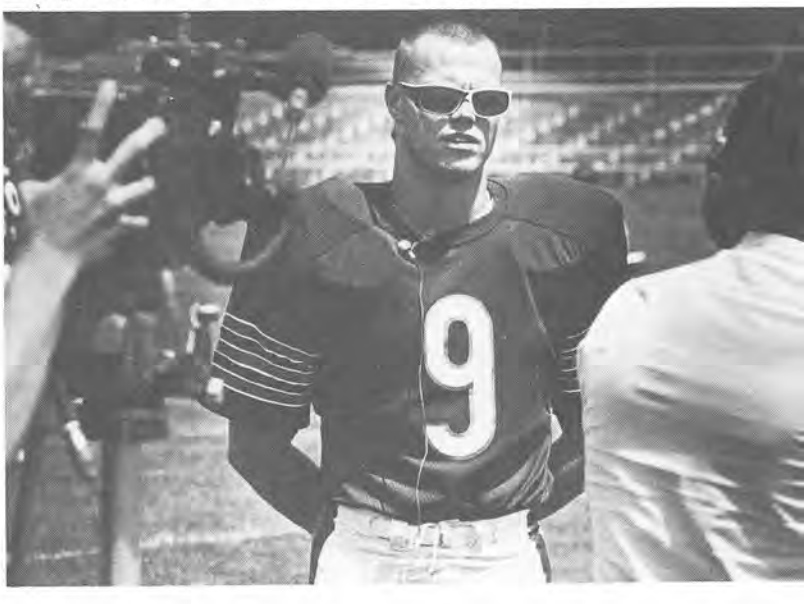
Until the Bears win a Super Bowl, something won't be right for McMahon.

"He thinks he's our best passer, our best runner, and our best blocker," said Ditka. "All he wants to do is win."



Head & Shoulders: *Quarterback Jim McMahon displays his punk haircut and bare belly at training camp.*

New Wave: *Quarterback Jim McMahon meets the reporters on photo day. Weird sunglasses and punk haircut—plus talent and good looks.*



6

Sweetness

For a while, Walter Payton seemed a mere part of the Bears rather than the heart of the Bears.

Payton was blocking while Jim McMahon threw touchdown passes and the Bears were off to their best start since 1942.

"Walter Payton is still a big part of this offense," said McMahon.

It sounded as strange as saying water is still a big part of Niagara Falls.

But soon Payton was defying defenses and age again, gaining 100 yards a game as routinely as he ever did, proving what he had said all along.

"This Chicago Bear team does not consist of one individual. Or not even two individuals," said Payton.

McMahon's passing was the difference; Payton's running made the difference possible.

While defenses stacked to stop Payton, McMahon took advantage of single coverage on his wide receivers and threw the ball until Payton had room to run. It became the best-balanced offense in the league.

"It's about winning," said Payton. "That's all it's about. Whatever it takes to win. It doesn't mean you have to gain 100 yards each game. It doesn't mean you have to throw the ball for 400 yards each game."

Entering New Territory

When the Bears beat the world champion 49ers in week six, it put the Bears above .500 for the first time in Payton's pro career. In 153 games since he arrived in 1975, the Bears were 77-76.

Soon, Payton crossed the 14,000-yard mark, new territory for National Football League

Break Fluid: *Running Back Walter Payton breaks a tackle against the Vikings.*

Catching Up: *49ers Cornerback Ronnie Lott (42) chases as Running Back Walter Payton heads towards the goal line.*

Too Late: *Running Back Walter Payton is hit by San Francisco Cornerback Ronnie Lott (42) at the goal line, after Payton scored a TD.*

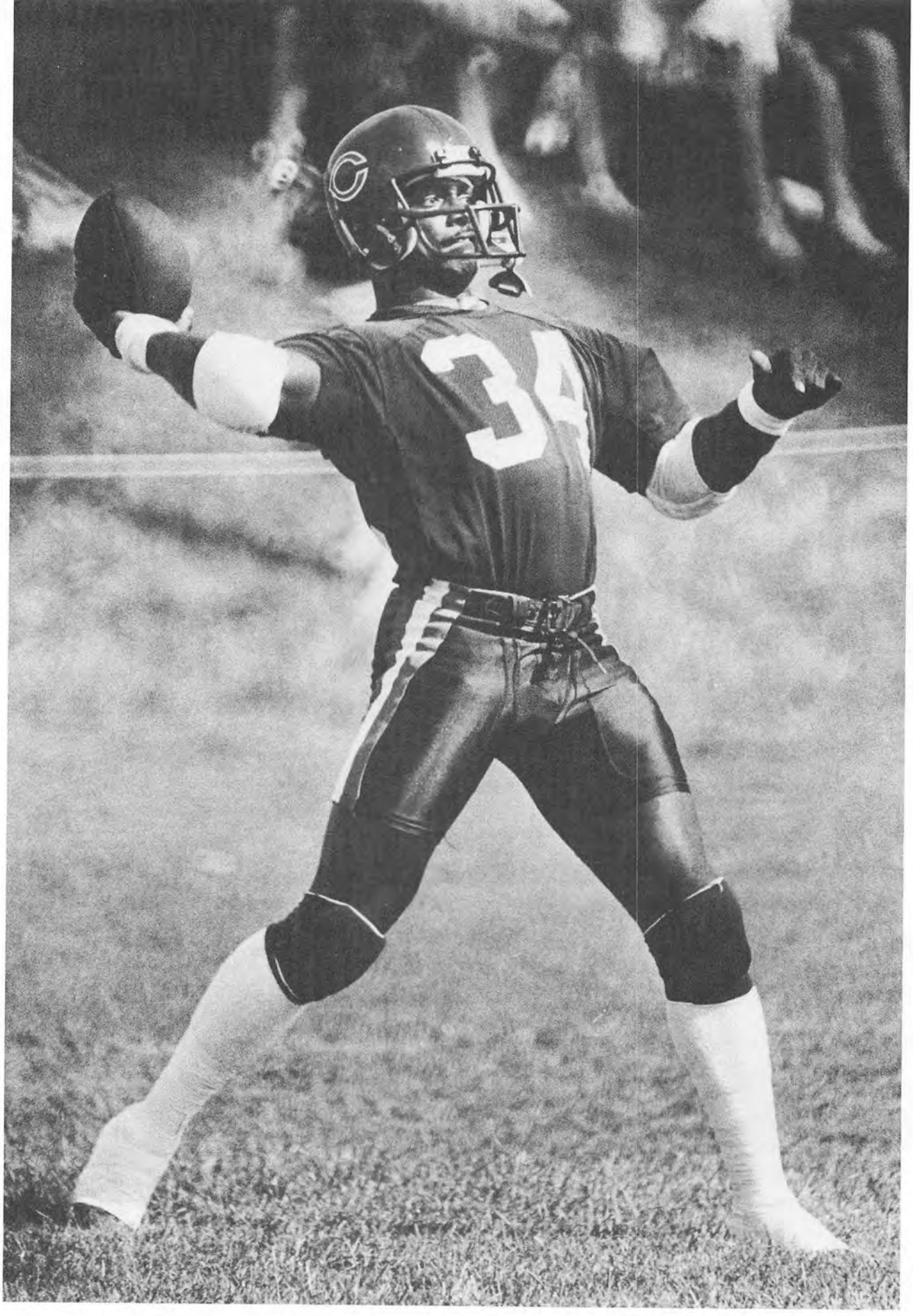
rushers. Each step was history. Each carry was history. Each victory was the only important thing. The only goal left for Payton was the one he could not attain alone, a Super Bowl.

When he iced the 49er game in the final minutes and later lifted the Bears over the Packers in Green Bay, Payton looked like he was capable of dragging his team into New Orleans on his cape.

"I hear people say he's lost a step. That's pure bull," said fullback Matt Suhey. "He's absolutely as good as he's ever been. Probably, he is contributing as much as he ever has, but he doesn't

Sweet Feet: *Running Back Walter Payton shows his famous footwork as he tries to get around Green Bay linebacker Mike Douglass.*

Buffalo Shuffle: *Running Back Walter Payton leaps over a fallen Buffalo Bill for big yardage in a pre-season meeting.*



Why Not: *Running Back Walter Payton demonstrates his quarterback talents during training camp practice in Platteville, WI.*

always have the ball doing it. He picks up blitzes, blocks, runs great pass patterns. Anything they're asking him to do, he does.

"He's not frustrated. He's in his glory now."

In the final 7 minutes, 33 seconds of the 49er game when the Bears marched 66 yards for the clinching touchdown, here was the sequence of plays:

Payton left 9, Payton middle 4, Payton left 7, Payton middle 2, Payton middle 2. Payton left 6, Suhey left 2, Payton middle 3, Payton left 2, Suhey no gain, Suhey pass 9, Dennis Gentry middle 3, Payton left 17 for touchdown.

The 49ers knew the Bears were going to run.

Against the Packers in Green Bay, Payton rescued an ugly brawl that the Bears were in danger of losing.

"He won it single handedly," said defensive tackle Dan Hampton.

The Packers were out for blood two weeks after a humiliating loss to the Bears on Monday night television. On the eighth play of the game, Packer cornerback Mark Lee was ejected for riding Payton eight yards out of bounds and over the Bears' bench.

The Packers were penalized four times and the Bears twice for personal fouls in the first half. Then Payton went to work erasing the graffiti by stomping over every inch of Lambeau Field for 192 yards and the winning touchdown.

With 10:31 to play and the Bears behind 10-9, McMahon called an audible to switch Payton from a toss left to a power sweep right. He cut through a hole made by tackle Keith Van Horne and guard Tom Thayer, bounced off 250-pound linebacker Brian Noble, and raced into the end zone.

Not Bad Stats

The performance was his best in seven years and tied his third-highest yardage total. It brought renewed raves from coach Mike Ditka and teammates. It even upstaged the 4-yard touchdown pass from McMahon to Payton's goal-line running mate, 308-pound William Perry.

Perry got the headlines for his stunning catch, but it was Payton who told Perry where to line up.

"I was too close to the line and Walter told me to step back a half step," said Perry.

On the play before Perry's touchdown catch, Payton swept left end for no gain. Hampton saw the run the next day in the film and was awed.

"He avoided four guys to get to the line of

Sky High: *Running Back Walter Payton makes a spectacular catch against Green Bay.*

scrimmage," marveled Hampton. "I turned around and told Steve McMichael, 'That's the greatest run I've ever seen in football.'"

"He's the very best football player I've ever seen, period. At any position," said Ditka.

"Oh, no question," said Hampton. "Easily he's the best football player of our time. Bar none.

"Walter is the leader of the offense by example. McMahon is the guy they can associate with as one of their own. A mortal. No one on this football team and no one in the NFL is actually in Walter Payton's league."

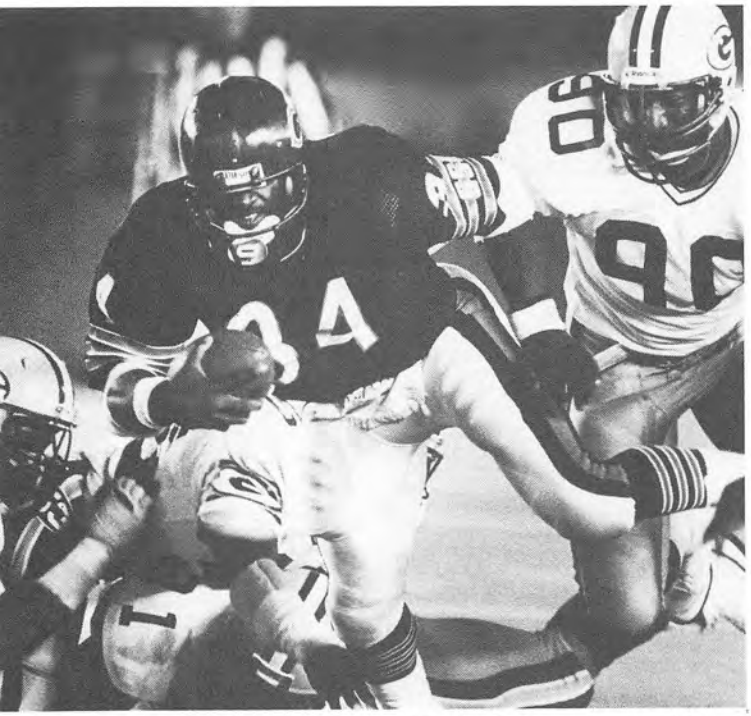
The Bears are content to be on his side.

"We're extremely close friends and we've talked about the things he wants to accomplish," said Suhey. "One thing he's often said is, he's got the records, he's got a good life, he's made a lot of money out of this, but he hasn't got the ultimate accomplishment: To win the Super Bowl."

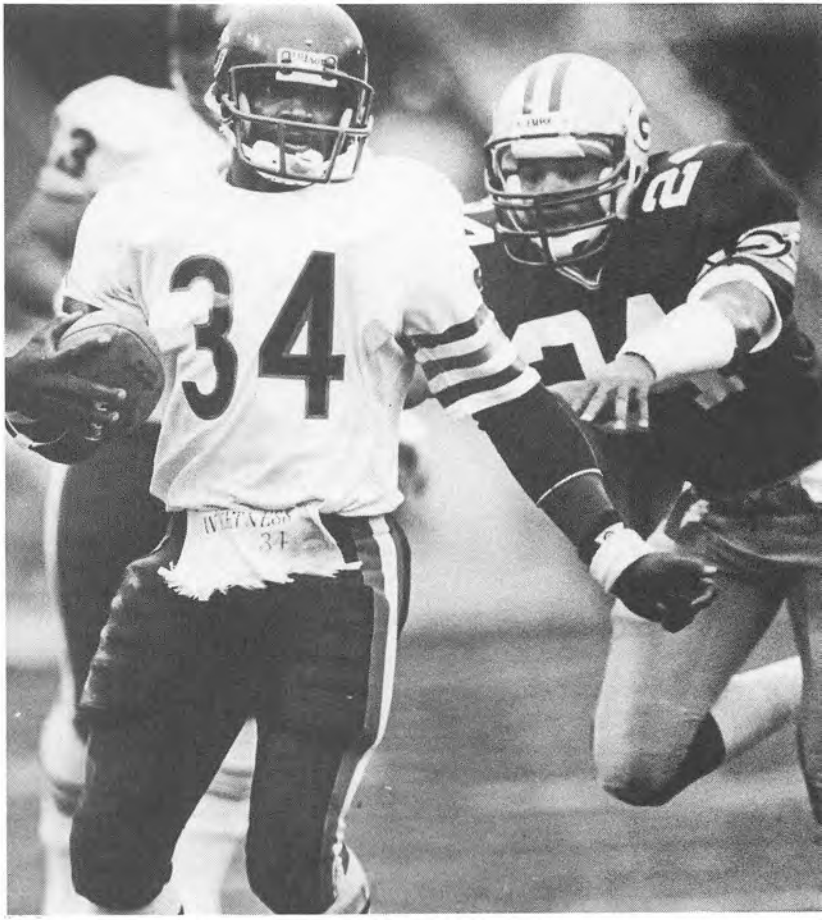
In his 11th season, Payton was cautiously optimistic.

"I'm just happy to be in this situation, to be with a team that for so long has struggled and tried a lot of different methods to get to a good situation, and now it's finally here," he said. "I just hope I can be a small part in making it stay there."

Show 'n Tell: *Running Back Walter Payton (34) shows William Perry (72) where to line up for his touchdown play.*

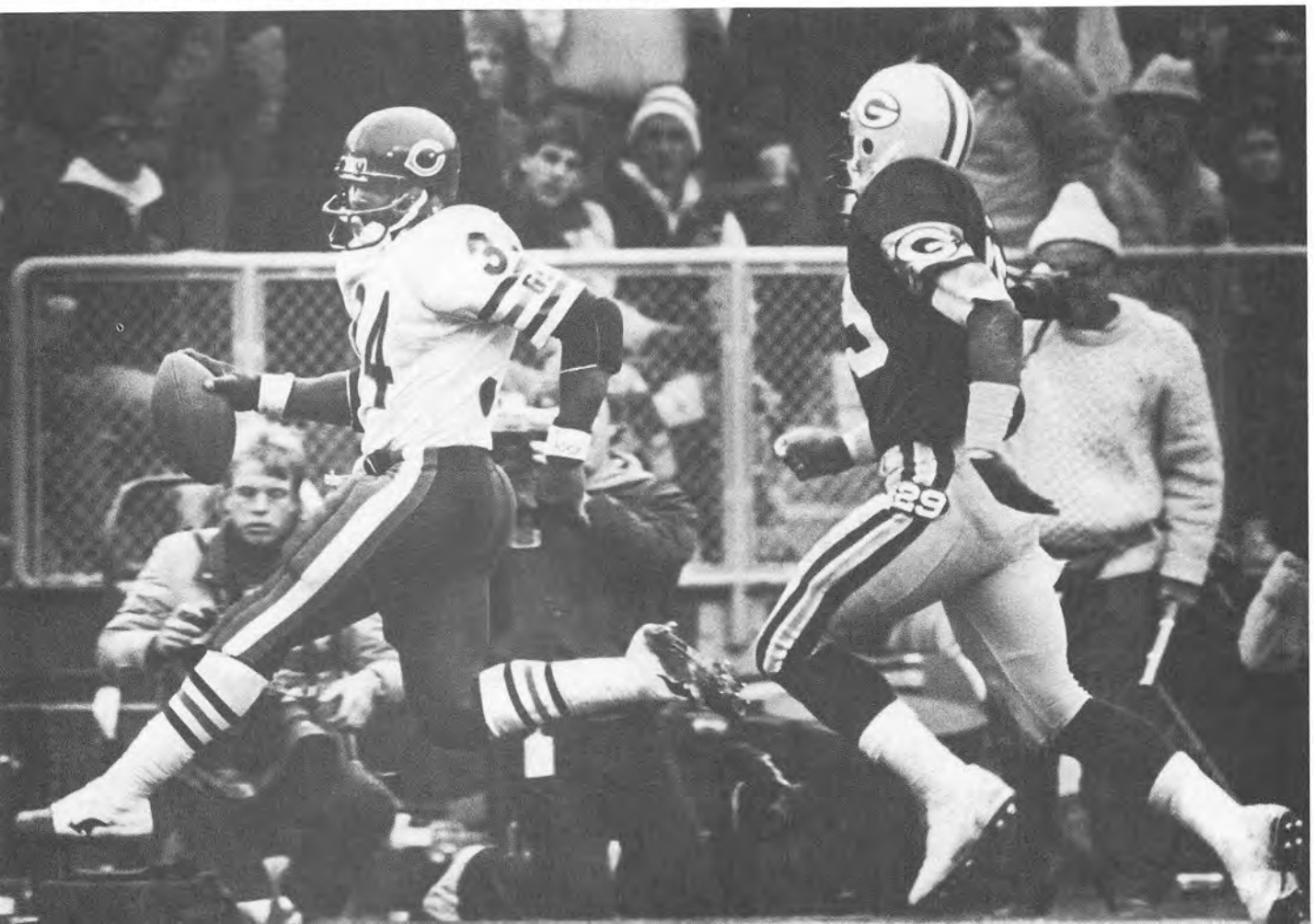


Good Night: *Running Back Walter Payton blows past Green Bay's Defensive End Ezra Johnson (90) during the Monday night game.*



Last Ditch: *Running Back Walter Payton senses trouble as Green Bay Defensive Back Mossy Cade (24) comes up from behind.*

Poetry-In-Motion: *Running Back Walter Payton scores on a touchdown run against Green Bay.*



7

The Refrigerator

I was big when I was little," said William Perry the day he was drafted by the Bears. Chicago soon discovered how big.

"The Refrigerator" was born for the City of Big Shoulders.

"I feel great. I almost tore the roof off the house. I'm ready to get into that terrible defense they got up there," said Perry.

Instead, he got into coach Mike Ditka's offense before he got into the defense of skeptical coordinator Buddy Ryan, who had termed him "a wasted draft choice."

Maybe Ryan meant waisted.

What a Monday Night Debut

Against the Green Bay Packers on Monday night, Oct. 21, Perry stunned the Packers and a national television audience by lining up as a 308-pound fullback at the goal line.

Behind 7-0, the Bears sent Walter Payton to follow an awesome block by Perry for the tying touchdown.

Then Perry grabbed a handoff from quarterback Jim McMahon as if it were real pigskin and scored what proved to be the winning touchdown. He nearly flattened the ball with an awesome spike.

"I was trying to get all the air out," Perry said.

Later, he created another huge hole for another Payton touchdown. The Bears won 23-7.

The words of the Bear Fight Song echoed with new lyrics:

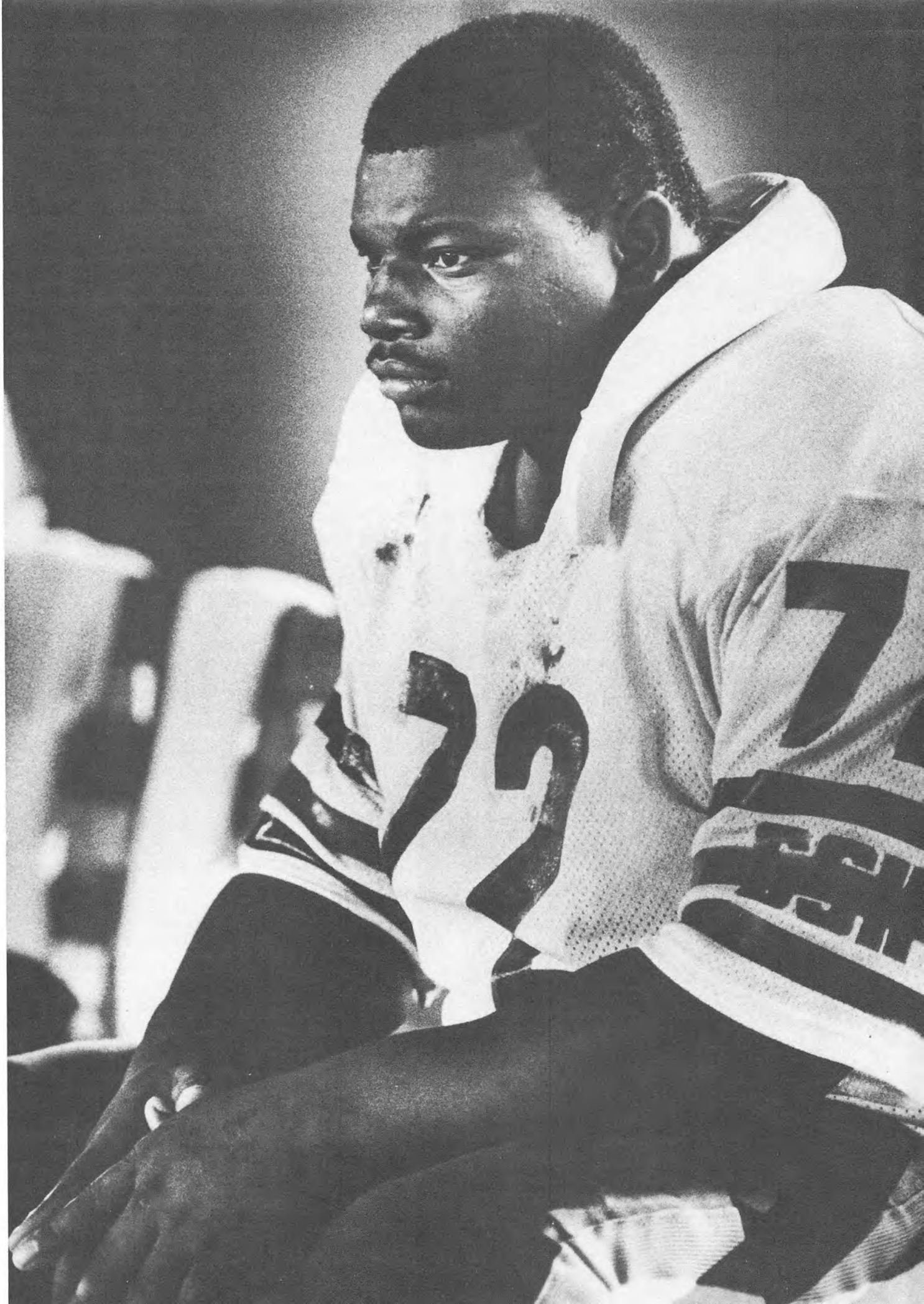
"We'll never forget the way you thrilled the nation with your P-formation."

A New National Hero

If Ditka's idea didn't change the face of football, it certainly put a smile on it.

"I didn't mean to make him a national hero," said Ditka.

***D Frosting:** Defensive Tackle William "Refrigerator" Perry cools out during a break in the action against the Colts.*



Thrust and Perry: *Defensive Tackle William Perry jumps for joy after sacking the quarterback.*

The Letterman and Carson shows called. Perry appeared on the Today show. Appliance companies and other manufacturers flooded Perry's agent with endorsement requests. The Washington Post wrote an editorial about him. More than one Chicago trick-or-treater went dressed as a refrigerator on Halloween.

Did Ditka do it as a tribute to all those football players who never get to carry the ball?

"And maybe for everybody who is a little bit overweight," said Ditka.

It was more than a show; it was real football. The week before, Ditka had used Perry as a runner to kill the clock in a victory over the defending world champion San Francisco 49ers. That was seen as a hefty payback to 49er coach Bill Walsh for using 270-pound guard Guy McIntyre as a blocker in the 49er backfield when the 49ers beat the Bears in the 1984 National Football Conference championship game.

"I just wanted to see if he could run the ball," said Ditka. "It gives you food for thought at the goal line, doesn't it?"

That was all Perry had to hear. He charged the Packer goal line like it was a cafeteria line, knocking linebacker George Cumby into sports trivia.

Outweighed by nearly 100 pounds, Cumby flew backwards like a cartoon character, body prone, arms flying.

"Usually when two bodies hit, there's an impact point and both stop a little bit," said Ditka. "When they hit, it was like an earth mover."

"I only have one obligation and that's to block the linebacker," said Perry. "Whoever else got in the way I took him out, too. Cumby didn't say anything. I think I rung his bell."

"I felt like I was stealing on that second touch-

down," said Payton. "I walked into the end zone. He's good to hide behind."

Give the Man Credit

Packer coach Forrest Gregg said he didn't think Perry would revolutionize goal line offense, but when he looked at the film, he was impressed.

"Remember during the draft when everybody was sort of giggling about William Perry?" asked Gregg. "You look at the film and it's not a laughing matter, gentlemen. It's pretty awesome."

The following week against the Minnesota Vikings, Perry played nose tackle in the Bears' special "46" defense and came up with the first sack of his career against Minnesota quarterback Tommy Kramer.

"Sacking the quarterback is a whole lot better than scoring a touchdown," said Perry.

The week after Minnesota, the Bears traveled to Green Bay, where the fans were waiting for "The Refrigerator" in force. Outside Lambeau Field, one group sold whacks at an old refrigerator with the No. 72 painted on it. For a dollar, anyone could take a mallet and "whack the refrigerator for cerebral palsy."

With the Bears trailing 3-0, Perry again lined up in the backfield at the 4-yard line on third down. This time, he went in motion from left to right. Gumby braced to take on another block from Perry, but Perry surprised everyone by

Helping Hand: *Defensive Tackle William Perry shifted position and gears to score a touchdown, and then lent a hand to Offensive Tackle Keith Van Horne Monday night at Green Bay.*

running past Gumby into the end zone where he caught a pass from McMahon.

It was the first time he had ever caught a pass and the first time in pro football history that a 300-pounder caught a planned touchdown pass. He was the widest wide receiver who ever lived.

"What would you do if Perry was coming at you?" reasoned Ditka. "You would get out of the way."

I had to keep a straight face when I got on the line," said Perry. "This was better than the last touchdown because it was something new."

"The only thing that upset me is he said he would do a 360-degree dunk over the goal post," said center Jay Hilgenberg.

Beautiful, Just Beautiful

Even Packer coach Gregg couldn't resist a smile.

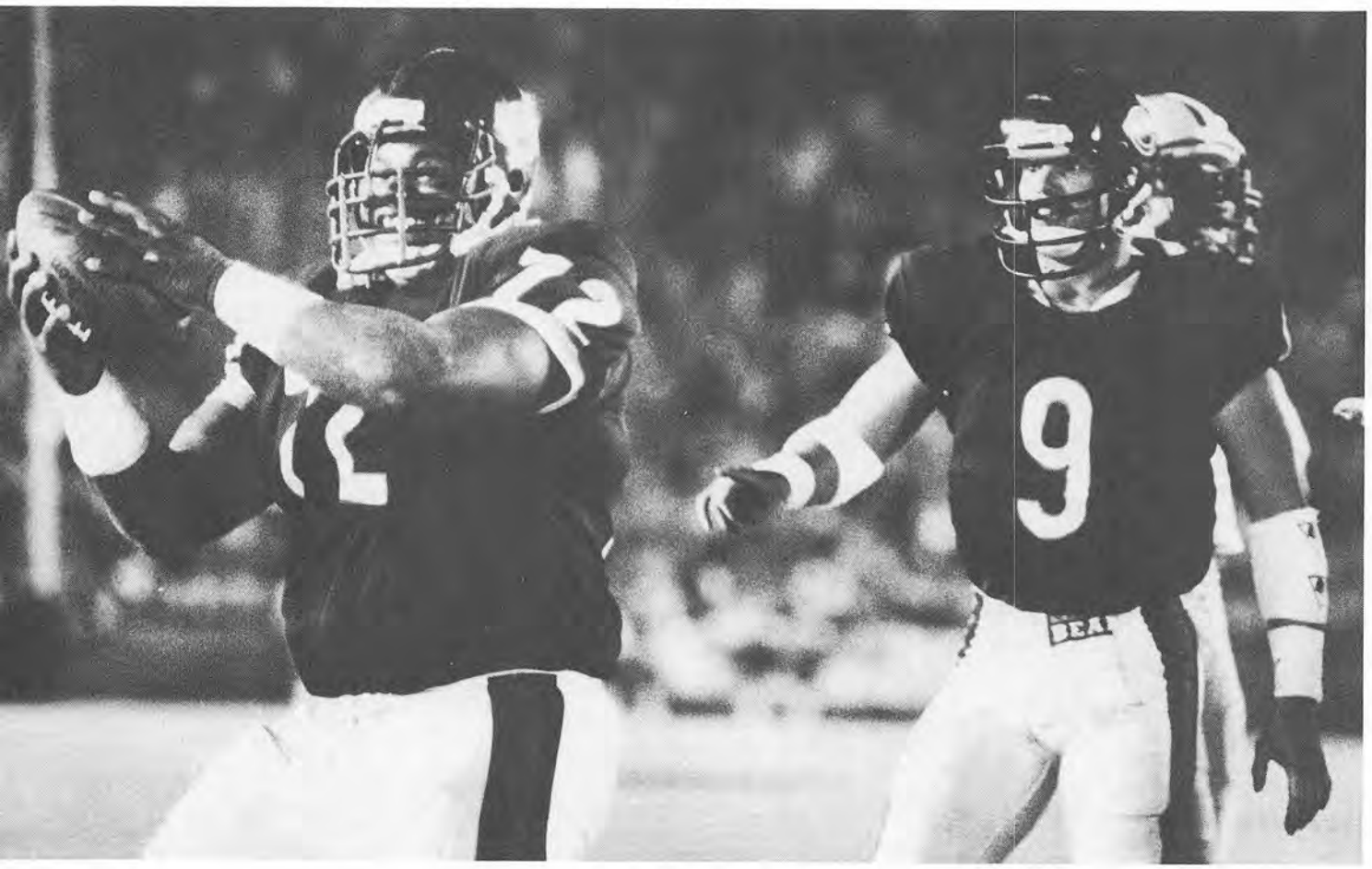
"He was beautiful, wasn't he?" Gregg admitted.

Suddenly, Perry was more than a ton of fun. He was a weapon that made defenses cringe as well as grin.

Perry's performance justified his first-round selection in the draft by Ditka and Bears' director of player personnel Bill Tobin.

Bears' president Michael McCaskey and general manager Jerry Vainisi wanted to draft Florida State Wide Receiver Jessie Hester. But Tobin and Ditka convinced them that Perry was

***First of Many:** A jubilant William Perry prepares to spike the ball after scoring a touchdown against the Packers on Monday night.*



the best football player available, as well as the biggest.

They admitted they were gambling on Perry's character, because he was overweight and played most of his senior year at Clemson out of shape.

At a post-season game, Perry pegged a scale that registered 350 and the legend grew with his girth.

"He was closer to 400 than 300," said Tobin.

Before the draft, Perry had dieted to 327. On draft day, he was down to 318. By the time he reported to Bears' training camp late after a contract hassle, he was back near 330. But by his Monday night touchdown, he was down to 308 and falling to a goal of 295.

"We would rather play with William Perry than against him," said Tobin.

The 6-foot, 2-inch Perry's dimensions include a 23-inch neck and 48-inch waist that require a triple-extra-large shirt and a size 61 sport jacket. Each thigh is 34 inches around. But Perry's weight fluctuates almost by the hour.

"I can drink a soda and gain two pounds," he said.

Before he began watching his weight, he was on a seefood diet. Every time he saw food, he would eat.

"Three or four chickens, no problem, ribs," he explained, as if the ribs were a sorbet.

A Clemson coach swore he once saw Perry consume six whole chickens after a particularly taxing practice.

He Can Down a Few Burgers

Perry's real strength was cheeseburgers. He is believed to hold the record for most money spent by one man at one sitting at McDonald's: He spent $22.

Guts and Glory: *The fans are shocked and overjoyed when "The Fridge" makes a touchdown catch against the Packers.*

Sack Time: *William Perry and Otis Wilson lay high fives after sacking Viking Quarterback Tommy Kramer.*

One on Two: *Defensive Tackle William Perry gangs up on a double team of Viking linemen.*

He used to eat an entire box of cereal out of a mixing bowl.

Beer remains a staple of his diet.

"In college one time after a game I drank 48 cans of beer. Wasn't nothing. Just having a nice time," he said. "You drink it, see, and it fills you up. So you don't eat. Then the next day you sweat it out in practice, and you don't gain weight."

Perry, the 10th of 12 children of Inez and Hollie Perry of Aiken, S.C., weighed 13½ pounds at birth. By the time he was in first grade, he outweighed classmates by 50 pounds. In high school, he weighed 315.

"Nobody ever told me I had to go on a diet until I was drafted by the Bears," said Perry. "Nobody ever told me I had to lose weight when I was little."

Perry could start his own league with all his nicknames.

His mother calls him by his middle name, Anthony, to distinguish him from brother Willie.

Ditka calls him Bill.

How to Name a Fridge

A Clemson teammate named Ray Brown squeezed into an elevator with him and said: "I called him G.E. because he was as big as a refrigerator."

Clemson posed him for a life-sized poster in front of a refrigerator. Most Bear players call him "Fridge."

Bears' defensive tackle Dan Hampton called him "Sub Zero" until he saw him and changed it to "Biscuit," as in "one biscuit shy of 350."

The flabby image is both funny and not entirely accurate.

"He's a big man with some fat on. He's not just a fat man," said Ditka. "I think people expected to see a guy standing out there stationary and

not move. And if anybody came near him, he would try to clutch them like a flytrap. That's not what he is. He's a football player."

Bears' scout Jim Parmer, who saw him at Clemson, can vouch for that.

"I saw him stand in the hole after beating his man, pick up the lead blocker with his right arm, and pick up the ball carrier with his left arm. He had them about shoulder level and just dropped them. I've never seen anybody do that," said Parmer.

Parmer said he also saw Perry get blocked by 200-pounders.

His inconsistency prompted the Bears to structure his four-year $1.356 million contract so that roughly 25 percent is contingent on meeting conditioning clauses.

Perry said that was fine with him.

"I'll do whatever it takes. I want to help the Bears in any way I can. I know I can control my weight," he said.

Perry's weight never has crunched his sense of humor. He is remarkably good-natured.

"You can't help but like a guy with his personality," said Payton. "He's a terrific asset to the team, not only physically but mentally by the way he carries himself. Look at a guy his size and with all the remarks and fat jokes, he could really get down. But he has a real good personality and sense of humor about it."

The Bears are getting the last laugh.

Chilly Reception: *Defensive Tackle William Perry (72) and Redskin Quarterback Joe Theismann check to see where the pass has landed.*

Geared Up: *Perry effectively rushes St. Louis in his first game as a Bear following a week long training camp holdout.*

Chicago Bears' Numerical Roster

No.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Yr.	College
4	Steve Fuller	QB	6-4	195	28	7	Clemson
6	Kevin Butler	K	6-1	204	23	R	Georgia
8	Maury Buford	P	6-0	191	25	4	Texas Tech
9	Jim McMahon	QB	6-1	190	25	4	BYU
18	Mike Tomczak	QB	6-1	195	22	R	Ohio St.
21	Leslie Frazier	CB	6-0	187	26	5	Alcorn St.
22	Dave Duerson	S	6-1	203	24	3	Notre Dame
23	Shaun Gayle	CB	5-11	193	23	2	Ohio St.
26	Matt Suhey	FB	5-11	216	27	6	Penn St.
27	Mike Richardson	CB	6-0	188	24	3	Arizona St.
29	Dennis Gentry	RB	5-8	181	26	4	Baylor
31	Thomas Sanders	RB	5-11	203	23	R	Texas A&M
32	Ken Taylor	CB	6-1	185	21	R	Oregon St.
33	Calvin Thomas	FB	5-11	245	25	4	Illinois
34	Walter Payton	RB	5-10	202	31	11	Jackson St.
45	Gary Fencik	S	6-1	196	31	10	Yale
48	Reggie Phillips	DB	5-10	170	24	R	S. Methodist
50	Mike Singletary	LB	6-0	228	26	5	Baylor
51	Jim Morrisey	LB	6-3	215	22	R	Michigan St.
52	Cliff Thrift	LB	6-1	230	29	7	E.G. Oklahoma
55	Otis Wilson	LB	6-2	232	27	6	Louisville
57	Tom Thayer	G-C	6-4	261	23	R	Notre Dame
58	Wilber Marshall	LB	6-1	225	23	2	Florida
59	Ron Rivera	LB	6-3	239	23	2	California
60	Tom Andrews	OL	6-4	267	24	2	Louisville
62	Mark Bortz	G	6-6	269	24	3	Iowa
63	Jay Hilgenberg	C	6-3	258	26	5	Iowa
70	Henry Waechter	DT	6-5	275	26	4	Nebraska
71	Andy Frederick	T	6-6	265	31	9	New Mexico
72	William Perry	DT	6-2	325	22	R	Clemson
73	Mike Hartenstine	DE	6-3	254	32	11	Pennsylvania St.
74	Jim Covert	T	6-4	271	25	3	Pittsburgh
75	Stefan Humphries	G	6-3	263	23	2	Michigan
76	Steve McMichael	DT	6-2	260	27	6	Texas
78	Keith Van Horne	T	6-6	280	27	5	USC
80	Tim Wrightman	TE	6-3	237	25	R	UCLA
81	James Maness	WR	6-1	174	22	R	Texas Christian
82	Ken Margerum	WR	6-0	180	26	4	Stanford
83	Willie Gault	WR	6-0	178	24	3	Tennessee
85	Dennis McKinnon	WR	6-1	185	23	3	Florida St.

86	Brad Anderson	WR	6-2	198	24	2	Arizona
87	Emery Moorehead . .	TE	6-2	220	31	9	Colorado
89	Keith Ortego	WR	6-0	180	22	R	McNeese St.
95	Richard Dent	DE	6-5	263	24	3	Tennessee St.
98	Tyrone Keys	DE	6-7	267	25	3	Mississippi St.
99	Dan Hampton	DT	6-5	267	27	7	Arkansas

COACHING STAFF

HEAD COACH: Mike Ditka

ASSISTANTS: Jim Dooley, Dale Haupt, Ed Hughes, Steve Kazor, Jim LaRue, Ted Plumb, Johnny Roland, Buddy Ryan, Dick Stanfel.

Chicago Bears' Depth Chart

Offense

WR	83 Willie Gault, 82 Ken Margerum
LT	74 Jim Covert, 71 Andy Frederick
LG	62 Mark Bortz, 57 Tom Thayer
C	63 Jay Hilgenberg, 60 Tom Andrews
RG	57 Tom Thayer, 75 Stefan Humphries
RT	78 Keith Van Horne, 71 Andy Frederick
TE	87 Emery Moorehead, 80 Tim Wrightman
RB	34 Walter Payton, 29 Dennis Gentry
FB	26 Matt Suhey, 33 Calvin Thomas
QB	9 Jim McMahon, 4 Steve Fuller
WR	85 Dennis McKinnon, 86 Brad Anderson

Defense

LE	73 Mike Hartenstine, 98 Tyrone Keys
LT	76 Steve McMichael, 72 William Perry
RT	99 Dan Hampton, 72 William Perry
RE	95 Richard Dent, 98 Tyrone Keys
LLB	55 Otis Wilson, 51 Jim Morrissey
MLB	50 Mike Singletary, 59 Ron Rivera
RLB	58 Wilbur Marshall, 59 Ron Rivera
SS	22 Dave Duerson, 23 Shaun Gayle
FS	45 Gary Fencik, 23 Shaun Gayle
LC	27 Mike Richardson, 48 Reggie Phillips
RC	21 Leslie Frazier, 31 Ken Taylor

Specialists

PK	6 Kevin Butler
P	8 Maury Buford
PC	63 Jay Hilgenberg, 57 Tom Thayer
KC	63 Jay Hilgenberg, 57 Tom Thayer
H	4 Steve Fuller, 18 Mike Tomczak
PR	31 Ken Taylor, 85 Dennis McKinnon
KR	83 Willie Gault, 29 Dennis Gentry

Don Pierson regularly covers the Chicago Bears for the Chicago Tribune.

Jonathan Daniel is an award-winning photographer for the News-Sun, Waukegan, IL, for the Bear Report, a newspaper devoted exclusively to the Chicago Bears, and for the Office of Sports Information, Northwestern University.

More than 100 sensational action photos and lively commentary capture The SUPER Season: 1985-86 Chicago Bears. It's all here. The defense. The offense. Mike Ditka, Jim McMahon, Walter Payton, William "Refrigerator" Perry, Mike Singletary. Relive the season from training camp to the memorable moments of the big games.

The Fun Is Back in Bear Football

"I don't like all the rules about you can't hit quarterbacks. Better not play this game if you don't want to get hit. I don't mind getting hit."—JIM McMAHON

"I think we've put some fun back into football. I know our opposition is not having a lot of fun."—MIKE DITKA

"Sacking the quarterback is a whole lot better than scoring a touchdown."—WILLIAM "REFRIGERATOR" PERRY

"This Chicago Bear team does not consist of one individual."—WALTER PAYTON

"I just see us being the perfect defense."—MIKE SINGLETARY

>>$6.95
ISBN 0-933893-13-2

BONUS BOOKS 160 EAST ILLINOIS CHICAGO, IL 60611

THE SUPER SEASON: 1985-86 CHICAGO BEARS

bonus books